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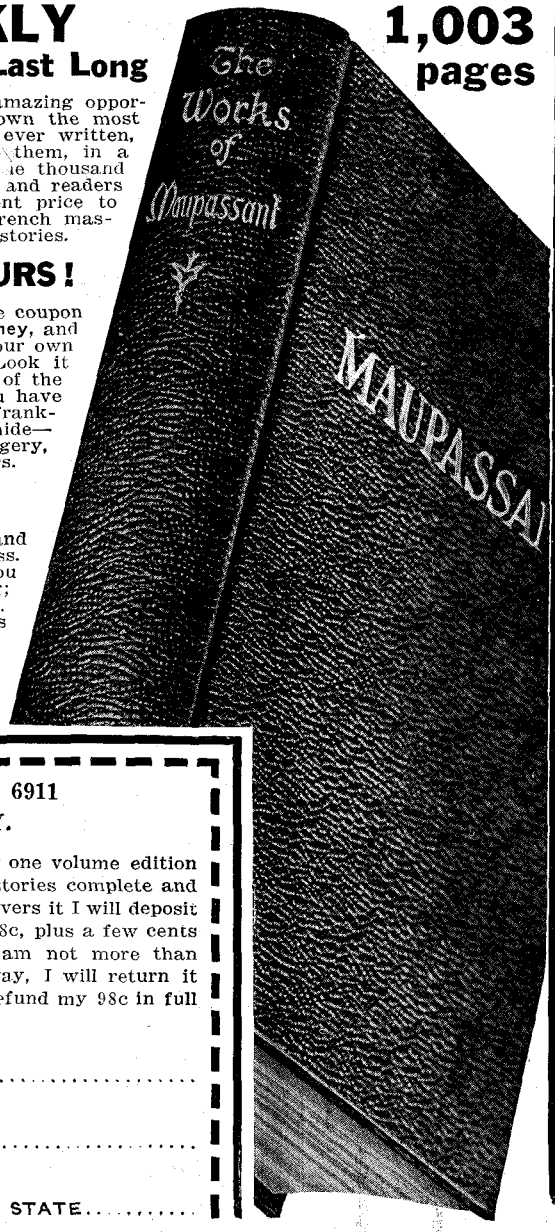

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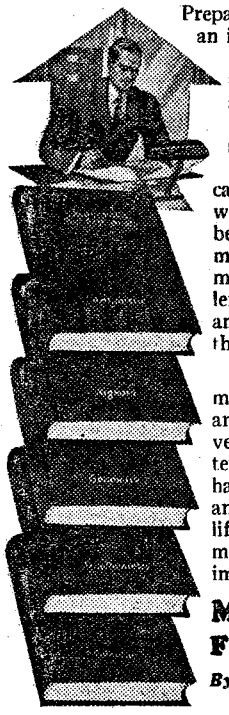

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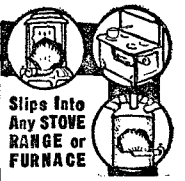

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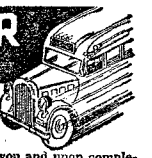

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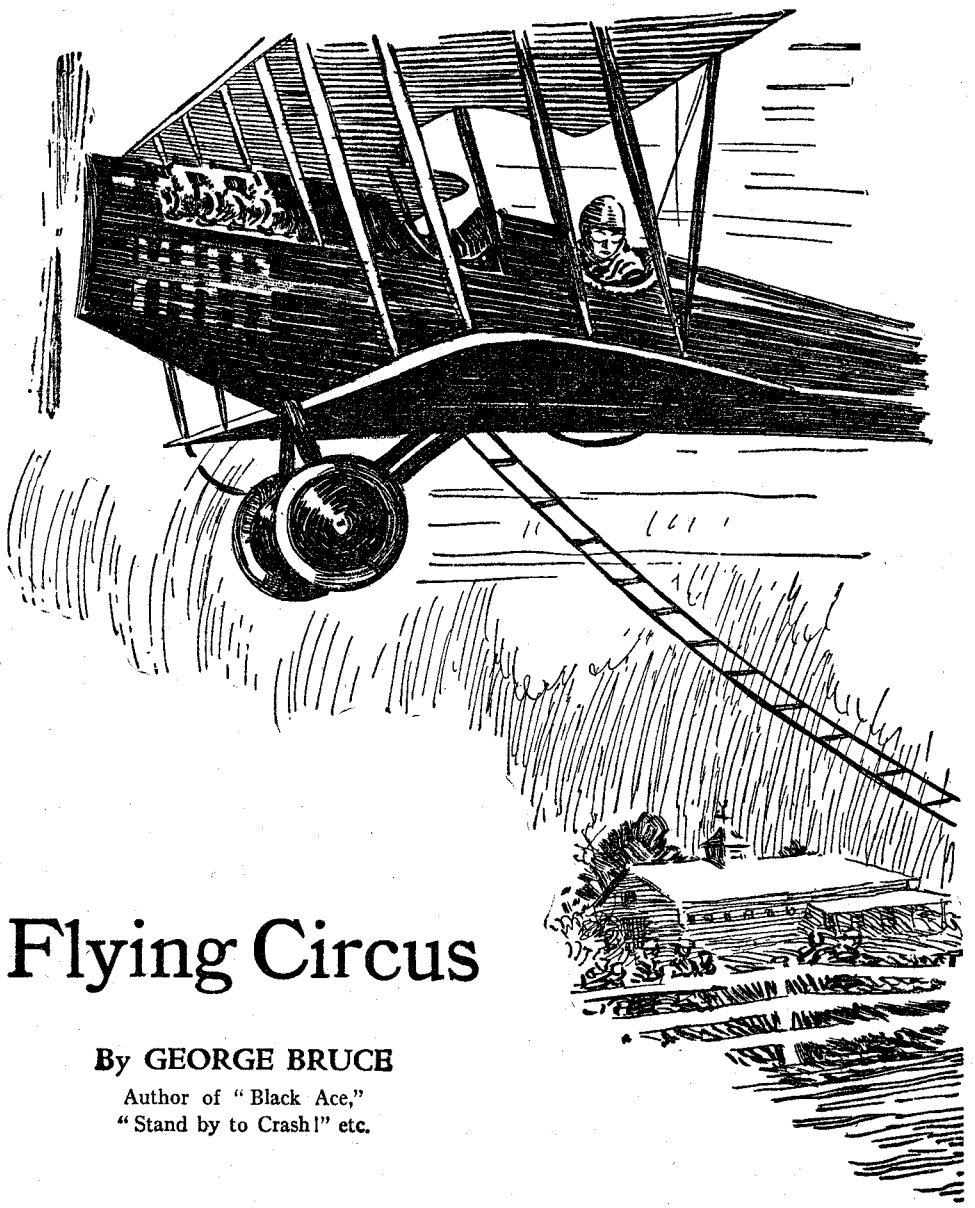

Flying Circus

By GEORGE BRUCE
Author of "Black Ace,"
"Stand by to Crash!" etc.

FOREWORD

ON a rough field in France a few breathless greaseballs watched the black speck of an airplane. Suddenly the plane flew a loop against the amazed cobalt sky. The spectators gasped. Such flying was unheard of. Was the man a maniac or a magician?

They awaited impatiently until the airplane bounced gently on the landing field, then rushed the young pilot. What manner of flying was that? They shrugged their shoulders in magnificent incomprehension.

Bidier gazed white-faced at them, and explained it was all an accident. He was as stunned as they. Even yet it didn't seem possible.

But Lincoln Beachey proved it was by

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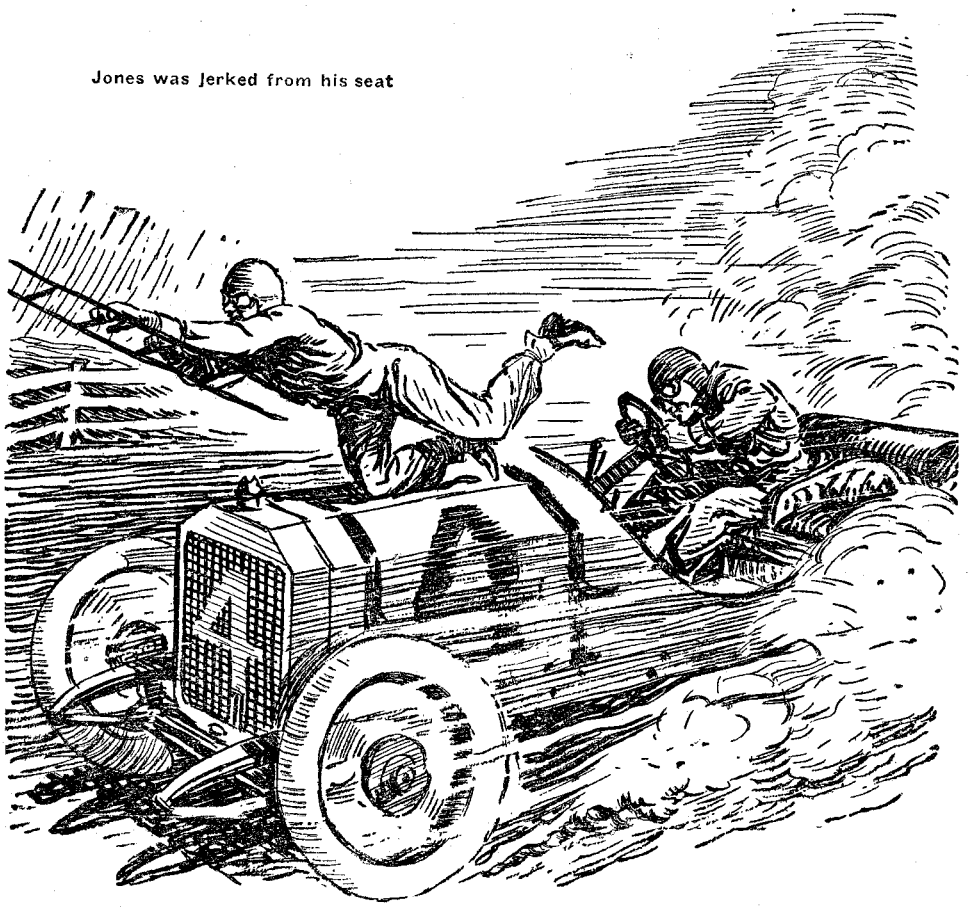
It was a daring and unheard-of stunt that Ken Morey proposed sixteen years ago to his friend Bill Taylor —but it was to make aviation history

flying the first deliberate loop at Massom before the eager body and mind of him were sacrificed to the skies.

A young American Army officer named Locklear, with a reputation for breathtaking eccentricity even in the wartime American Air Service, climbed out of a cockpit, walked the length of a lower wing on a flying airplane, stood on his head, holding onto the cross-brace wires, made faces at the frightened pilot, and walked back safely.

These incidents were separated by several years. Out of them grew the world famous Ace Flying Circus. But the resemblance between the finished exhibitions of the Ace Circus and the original, and sometimes accidental bits of aerobatics by Beachey and Locklear is the resemblance between the egg and the full grown chicken. Only an expert in embryology would be able to distinguish the characteristics they have in common.

Certainly if Beachey or Locklear, now flying immortals in their own right, had survived to watch the Ace Circus in action, they would have gasped with the millions of ordinary mortals who witnessed



Jones was jerked from his seat

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routine performances of the Circus; at the debonair daredeviltry of such men as Jack Early, Eddie Grimes, Monk Russell, Bill Taylor, and Buck Carson; and would have returned to the Valhalla of the flying great, shaking their heads in bewilderment, oppressed with the thought that in comparison their own lives had been drab and colorless.

OUT of the Ace Flying Circus grew the pattern of American flying. For a period of ten years during the heyday of the organization, flying men throughout the country looked upon those Ace pilots with awe and reverence. They were the Elect. They were the Prophets of the New Era. They were the warp and woof of the American conquest of the air. They were the Educators, the Torch Bearers. Through them millions of men and women flew for the first time, and returned to earth aglow and atremble with the glory of flight.

When the Ace Circus appeared over them, the population of hundreds of counties, cities and towns, throughout the United States, looked for the first time at an airplane in actual flight.

The cow pastures out of which they flew became the lighted, paved flying fields of today. The Circus' invisible tracks through the space between cities became the marked airways, beacon-guarded and definitely plotted. And in the open fields where they tied down the red ships of the Circus, hangars grew.

Explosive, dynamic characters, all of those Circus men, held together by the organizational and promotional genius of Ken Morey, who conceived and organized the circus. All but two of them are gone now. They died as they lived, their hands and feet on the controls, unafraid in the face of the Last Horizon.

But as long as propellers turn and the drone of a motor sounds from the skies; as long as winged shapes leave earth and reach toward the sun; as long as Man retains the urge to lift himself from the mired ruts of an everyday world and so endow himself with the greatest of the powers reserved for the high gods, so long will those men of the old Ace Circus be remembered with awe and reverence.

They were unique.

CHAPTER I.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, MAY, 1919.

KEN MOREY skidded the turns of a half mile dirt track on the outskirts of San Francisco. He was driving a red Stevens with a souped-up motor. A cloud of dust hung behind the stripped down car, whirling and twisting like a tornado. Morey hit the turns viciously, his feet jammed down on the throttle. His powerful arms wrenched the wheel and sent the car hurtling at the fence, skidding, and straightened it for the run.

The roar of the motor lifted to a higher, keener pitch. The red Stevens hurled itself over the track, passed the finish line, a red blur out of a dust cloud.

Morey shook his head in savage disgust.

He lifted his foot, coasted around the track, brought the racer into the pits. Under his goggles, his face was plastered thick with a layer of gray dust. His mouth was nothing more than a slit cut in a papier-mâché mask. His close-clipped, brick red hair stood up like pig bristles. The brakes squealed as he brought the car to a halt. He sat in the cockpit and lit himself a cigarette.

"Well?" he asked belligerently as if he knew the answer.

Bill Taylor looked at the face of a stop watch and shook his head. "Fifty-three seconds for the mile," he grinned. "Maybe you forgot to pull up the anchor."

"It beats hell," growled Morey. "I thought I was a cinch to knock a couple of seconds off the record. That blower should have done the trick."

"Too bad," consoled Taylor. "The

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record right now is 52.4 for the mile on a half mile dirt track. It's held by a Benz. You only did 53 flat in a patched together Stevens. You must be losing your nerve. . . ."

"I'm losing time on the turns," declared Morey. He lifted his goggles and looked at the heavy cloud of dust settling back onto the track. "Skidding turns, no matter how fast, cuts down forward speed. I'm going to get some guy to design me a set of four-wheel brakes. I'll gain four or five seconds in a mile."

"Four-wheel b r a k e s?'' scoffed Taylor.

"That's what I said, four-wheel brakes! Some day every car will have four-wheel brakes. If two-wheel brakes can stop a car in fifty feet, four-wheel brakes will stop it in twenty feet. The way I figure it, the time will come when it'll be a damned sight more important to be able to stop in a hurry than go places in a hurry. Gimme four-wheel brakes on this Stevens, so I can check speed just before I hit the turns . . . just a touch on the brake . . . and I'll knock that mile record for a loop."

"Why bother about the brakes?" kidded Taylor. "Why not add a couple of inches to the fenders and just fly around the turns. It ought to be a cinch for you."

MOREY was silent for a long moment. He stared at Bill Taylor's face. "You come up with the damnedest ideas, for a cluck without imagination," he said calmly. "You think you're kidding somebody. Well, look, my scrambled-brain friend, I'll show you just how much you're kidding. That idea is worth ten thousand bucks . . . cash in the hand."

"What idea?"

"That flying the turns thing." Morey was suddenly very serious. His little blue eyes were filled with lights of enthusiasm. "Something that never has been done—don't you get it? We'll race the Stevens against an airplane—against your Jenny. Twenty laps around the track—you got to fly over the track, no short cuts on the banks, and I got to drive the car. It's a natural for the newspapers. They'll eat it up. We'll have at least ten thousand people out here at a buck a head, and we'll give 'em a show that'll make their hair curl."

"Good Lord!" groaned Taylor. "Another brain storm."

"Brain storms are the things that keep ham an' eggs in empty stomachs," nodded M o r e y grimly. "Brain storms are the things that get advertising in the newspapers—so I can sell a Stevens now and then. Boy—it's a wow! A Stevens against an airplane—earth and sky meet in a thrilling, hair-raising duel of speed . . ."

"You talk like a circus sign board."

"Listen, Hot Shot," challenged Morey. "You came home with a chestful of war medals and a hangover. I heard tell that you got the medals for flying. The *Examiner* ran a story on you. 'World War Ace Returns to San Francisco'— Now a great Ace like you ought to be able to fly one little airplane around a half mile track without breaking his neck. Or maybe you've lost your touch? Or maybe I should hire the NC4 as soon as it completes a trip from the Azores?"

"Who do you think you're kidding!" snapped Taylor. "Listen, any time you want to make a bet, I'll fly around your little squirrel cage and I'll pick your hat off your head with the spreader bar while you're driving that sardine can, without touching your

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neck! What do you think of that?"

"That's what *you* say." Morey was arrogantly unconvinced. "I'll bet you five thousand bucks you can't do it!"

"You're crazy as hell. The nearest you ever came to five thousand bucks was the night you got tight and slept on the front steps of the Denver Mint. Five thousand bucks! I suppose you're having breakfast with President Wilson tomorrow?"

Morey snorted. "Cash in the hand, one half of the probable proceeds of the show I just told you about. Airplane against automobile! Ken Morey, daredevil of the dirt track and owner of the Morey Automobile Company, agents for the Stevens, against Bill Taylor, World War Ace. Well, what d'ya say?"

"You're even nuttier than I suspected."

"If I show you I can put it over—get the newspapers to go for it—will you fly the Jenny around the track?"

"Aw—hell—I suppose so."

"That's all I want to know!" grinned Morey. "Let's go to town."

TAYLOR folded his long legs under him and squatted beside Morey in the Stevens. The red behemoth snorted, spat flame, and rolled over the ground. People along the streets stopped to stare at it. It halted with impressive dignity before the show rooms of the Morey Automobile Company. Morey climbed out, his little bulldog-like face still covered with the dust of the track. He walked straight to his office and threw himself down into a chair in front of his desk.

"Get me the *Examiner*," he told the operator. There was a little frown of concentration on his forehead and his gray-blue eyes were glinting.

"Sports department," he said.

"Oh, hello. That you, Miller? Listen! I've got something for you. It'll give you something to really exercise the old adjectives. Bill Taylor—you know Bill—sure well, Bill Taylor and I are going to have a race. He has an idea that his plane can beat my Stevens twenty laps around a half-mile track. I drove the Stevens a mile in fifty three seconds less than half an hour ago. Sure . . . I know, one fifth of a second behind the world's record. I think with a little competition I can knock off that fifth of a second—or better. Sure, he has to fly right down on the ground. It'll be a thrill, won't it? First time such a contest has ever been pulled off." He listened for a minute before he hung up the receiver.

He was grinning as he turned to Taylor.

"Wait till you see the *Examiner!*" he prophesied. "You can always depend on Miller to handle a story right—only I think I'll write this one for him. Just the technical details, you understand. I don't want him to miss anything."

Taylor stood there. He seemed bereft of words.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" demanded Morey. "You beat it! You got work to do. See if you can get that Jenny to look like something more than a ghost with its ribs sticking out. Give it a coat of paint—wait—nice bright *red* paint. And try to get the motor hitting so it sounds as if it'll keep the crate flying for as long as half an hour."

"Listen!" said Taylor hotly. "You worry about that junk pile of yours."

"On your way!" waved Morey. "I got a million things to do—call the other papers, have tickets printed—"

"You said five thousand bucks!" reminded Taylor pointedly.

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"There you go! Money! You don't seem to realize that this is the greatest, most dazzling, daredevil exhibition the City of San Francisco ever saw. The first time in the history of the world . . . and you stand there talking about money! I'm ashamed of you."

"Five thousand bucks," repeated Taylor. "It was your idea." He closed the door after him with great deliberation.

CHAPTER II.

STUNT MAN.

THAT afternoon Ken Morey, scrouged down in his chair, read the newspapers. There was a worried look in his eyes, and a jumping nervousness quivered within his body. There were pictures on the front page. Pictures of Ken Morey and Bill Taylor. Pictures of Ken Morey's racing Stevens and Bill Taylor's JND4 Curtiss airplane. There were pictures of Morey's Speedway. There was a running story under the captions covering three columns. Miller of the *Examiner* had gone to town. So had the other sports writers.

When he read the last word in all of the papers, Morey paced back and forth within the confines of his office. "It's a natural or bust!" he was telling himself. "We put on the damnedest show this man's town ever looked at—or we sneak out of town and never come back." Little beads of sweat stood out on his forehead. The muscles of his jaw were set. His little button of a nose was fiery red.

He beat a fist into the palm of his hand. "It'll be a show," he said grimly. "It'll be a show! Or else—"

He went back to the desk. His stenographer opened the door warily. "There's a young fellow out here who wants to see you," she said.

"What's he want?"

"I told you. He wants to see you."

Morey pawed at the papers on top of his desk. "Can't you see I'm busy? What do I sweat blood to pay you a salary for? Do I have to spell it out for you — I'm *busy!* Tell him I'm checking up on Babe Ruth's home run records — tell him I'm understudying Lionel Barrymore. Tell him anything. But I'm busy, see?"

She smiled sweetly. "O. K., Barney Oldfield—or is it Mr. McGraw now? You're busy," she admitted. She closed the door.

It opened again. Morey looked up. His mouth opened and closed. Then it opened again. He was looking at a young-old face with mocking, reckless eyes. A dark face, lean, the face of a Puck. Black hair and eyes. Lithe, hard body. The body was garbed in a gabardine coat with a belted back, and whipcord riding trousers which disappeared into cordovan boots.

The stenographer's face peered over the boy's shoulder. She was still smiling sweetly. "He wouldn't believe you were busy," she said. "Maybe he knows you."

"Well?" growled Morey. "What d'ya want?"

"The name is Jones—Jinx Jones." It seemed that the boy had the idea the mere mention of the name settled everything.

"Jones," smiled Morey in fine sarcasm. "Well, now . . . isn't that just too nice!"

"*Jinx* Jones," interrupted the unperturbed young man. "I figured that maybe, even in San Francisco, you may have heard of me." He gestured with a folded newspaper. "I wanted to talk to you about this stunt you're pull-

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ing—this airplane-automobile business. I'd like to cut in on that."

"Don't tell me that you've got an airplane in your pocket, or that you're a pilot?" implored Morey.

THE young face smiled coolly. "No—I'm not a pilot. I begin where those guys leave off. I'm a stunt man. I'll show you a press book if you want to see it. Human fly stuff, flagpole stuff, motorcycle racing with stunts."

"What's that got to do with airplanes?"

"Airplanes are a side line. I was buddies with a guy for a while in Texas. He had a Jenny. He was a war flier. Name of Thomas. I heard about guys doing stunts on airplanes. I figured to give it a try. This guy Thomas was a little nuts from the war, so he went for it. Well, for a couple of weeks, everyday, I went flying with him and did stunts on the wings of his ship. Not much—standing up on the top wing, standing on my head on the bottom wing, hanging from the wing skid and the spreader bar. Sitting on the center section while he flew the crate through a loop."

"*What?*" said Morey. The word was explosive.

"I sat on the center section while Thomas flew the ship through a loop," repeated the boy very slowly. "It's a cinch—centrifugal force holds you in place and you wrap your ankles around the center section cross-brace wires and hang onto the leading edge with your hands."

Morey stared at him.

"I did a couple of parachute jumps." continued the boy casually. "Just to see what it was like. I borrowed a Hardin chute from an old balloon jumper who was hanging around Thomas' field. It's all right. It's a kick the first time; after that it's just a pain."

Morey was breathing through his mouth.

"I had tough luck, though," finished Jinx Jones. "Thomas, the pilot, the guy that owned the plane, got himself plastered one night and went out to the field to fly. He got the crate off the ground without any trouble. But he couldn't find the ground to get it back on. He picked out the side of a barn for a landing field and washed himself out—along with the ship. It was plenty tough—I was just getting so that I really walked those wings."

There was a static silence in the room. Then Morey stirred in his chair.

"So?" he suggested.

"Well, I blew into town on a motorcycle a couple of hours ago, looking for a job, and I saw the stuff in the papers. I figured I'd come over and talk to you; see whether you'd like to jazz that show up a little. After all—what the hell is a race between an airplane and an automobile?"

Morey's hand reached for the telephone. "You've got one chance," he told the boy. "If you're telling me fairy stories this is the time to back out. If you're not—you've got a job. And if you *don't* make good on what you've told me I'll personally slap you into the middle of the 77th Division when it does its stuff on Fifth Avenue tomorrow!"

JINX JONES examined Ken Morey critically with his eyes. "Maybe—maybe not. I think you're a little fat around the belly to slap strange guys silly. But if you want a private exhibition, trot out the ship and I'll put on the act."

"Lenox 2419," said Morey into the

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telephone. He looked at Jinx Jones as he waited for the connection. Looked at him out of the corner of his eye.

"Hello, Bill?" he asked. "This is Ken. That crate of yours in flying condition? That's swell. Listen, I've got a maniac here in the office who has an idea that he can walk on the wings of an airplane. Yeah. No, no, it's no gag; he's right here, in the flesh.

"Listen. I'm going to bring him out to the ship. You beat it for the field. I'll meet you there. You'll fly around with this lunatic for a couple of minutes, just to prove that he's a liar. Hurry up now; we can get it in before dark. It's important."

Jinx Jones grinned whitely.

Morey snatched at his hat. "Let's go!" he said ominously.

They climbed into the red Stevens.

Bill Taylor met them at the field. The prop on the Jenny was turning over at idling speed, warming the motor.

"Say, what the hell is this?" demanded Taylor.

"Meet Jones — *Jinx* Jones," said Morey.

"You're Bill Taylor. I've seen your pictures," said Jones. "Glad to know you. Think the wings will stay on that crate?"

Taylor took a long breath, to blast the brat. But Jones was examining the leading edge of the lower wing.

"Ought to have a runway, a strip of thin aluminum or ply wood built along the leading edge of this lower, if you're going to use this crate for wing walking," he lectured. "Keeps from busting up the false ribs, and from stepping through the linen."

"He says he sits on the center section while the pilot flies a loop," commented Morey quietly.

"Oh, he does!" snorted Taylor.

"Sure," nodded Jones. "Can you fly a loop?"

Taylor's mouth closed like a trap. "Get in the front seat," he said. There was a glint in his eye. "Get ready to catch this punk when I bring him back," he whispered to Morey. "I've seen smart guys like this before."

He climbed into the cockpit. He opened the throttle. The Jenny took off in its lumbering stride. It circled the field, went up five hundred feet. The sound of the motor was suddenly a steady, low throb as Taylor pulled back on the throttle.

Morey, his neck cramped, took a sharp breath.

Overhead, Jinx Jones got out of the front cockpit, sauntered out on the right wing, taking infinite care not to step between the false ribs of the leading edge, touching the struts lightly as he walked. He came to the outer bay strut. He looked down, waved his hand to Morey. Then, like a monkey, a monkey encumbered with riding boots and breeches, he climbed up the outer bay strut, reached for the leading edge of the upper wing, pulled himself up on its top surface by the sheer strength of his arms.

He lay on his belly for a moment on top of the wing. Then he stood upright, his instep hooked into the cabane wires. Stood upright, waved his arms. After that he stood on his head, one arm wrapped around the cabane strut. Stood up so straight that his feet swayed out over the leading edge—over five hundred feet of space, and sudden death.

BELOW, Morey stood, stunned, his mouth dry, his body wet with sweat. "Well I'll be damned," he said over and over.

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The monkey in the riding boots was sliding down the outer bay strut. He looked around for a moment as if undecided what to do next. Then he ran lightly back over the wing, disappeared behind the fuselage close to the motor cowling, and reappeared on the landing gear of the Jenny, sitting on the spreader bar—and axle housing—dangling his legs. Then he hung from the spreader bar by his knees. He pulled himself back to sitting position. He climbed back to the wing. He thrust his head close to Bill Taylor's helmeted head.

Taylor cut the gun to hear what he was saying.

Then the motor roared again and Jinx Jones climbed into the front cockpit and stayed there until the ship was a thousand feet higher. He climbed out of the cockpit, walked forward, stood on the motor cowling, using the flying and nose drift wires for a step-ladder, boosted himself up until he was sitting on the center section.

He waved his hand.

And Bill Taylor opened the OX5 motor in the Jenny wide. It whined and hammered. The big winged crate nosed down steeply to pick up maximum speed. Down it thundered for three hundred feet, then surged upward . . . up and up . . . until it was hanging inverted in mid-air and fell over in the loop.

And on the center section, as it went all the way over, was the same Jinx Jones.

The Jenny landed out of a series of descending spirals.

Morey found Jinx Jones standing in front of him, grinning.

"It's a cinch to do that stuff when you have a good pilot," he was telling Morey. "You got to have confidence in the man flying the ship, know what he's going to do under any conditions. Trouble with the Thomas guy, I never knew when he would go screwy and dump me off the wing — just for a laugh."

There was a weakness in Morey's belly and his hands were shaking as he lit a cigarette.

"I take it back, kid," he told Jinx. "You're—cripes—I never saw anything like that!"

"Nobody did," consoled the boy. "I made most of that stuff up myself."

Taylor was grinning. He looked like a man who had just escaped from certain death.

"You got a lot of guts, kid," he told Jinx.

"Wait till we work together a couple of times," promised Jinx. "I'll show you some stuff I got figured that will drive you nuts."

"Where you staying in town, Jones?" asked Morey.

"Nowhere, yet. I figured you'd take care of all that."

Morey grinned. He slapped the kid on the back. "You got what it takes. We're going to get along, swell."

THERE was a puzzled look in Taylor's eyes. Morey slapping someone on the back, going overboard for a stranger, was disconcerting. Morey was the original Dead Pan Dick with strangers. It usually took him months to thaw out and show friendliness—if ever.

On the way back to town, with the three of them crowded in the narrow cockpit of the racer, Jinx Jones said: "I got an idea for that show of yours. That's what I came to see you about. It's a wow. Listen. A change from a racing automobile to a flying airplane get it? It's a cinch. We make a ladder out of flexible cable, with gas

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pipe for rungs. We fasten it on to the spreader bar of Bill's ship. We put a slip knot in it, with a cord running up to his cockpit, so that he can drop the ladder when he gets ready, and let it hang down under him.

"Then he flies right over the automobile, low enough to touch it with the bottom of the ladder. I stand up in the seat of the Stevens, reach up, grab the ladder; Bill pulls away, climbs a little to lift me clear, and then I climb up the ladder onto the spreader bar, pull the ladder up after me, tie it fast so that it won't drag when Bill makes his landing, climb into the front seat—and Bill comes down and lands in the infield of the race track."

Ken Morey stopped the racer in the middle of the street.

"That's the craziest damned thing I ever heard," he said tautly.

"That's what you said before. You get me the ladder made, and I'll show you it's a cinch. I got it all figured out in my mind."

Morey looked at Taylor. Taylor had his arm around the kid's shoulders.

"He'll do it," promised Taylor. "If he says he can do it—you can stop worrying. I found that out in ten minutes, upstairs with him."

Morey shifted gears slowly and deliberately. The Stevens rolled on. "I think we're all candidates for the booby hatch," he growled.

But the hot glow in his eyes mocked at the growl in his voice.

CHAPTER III.

FOR THE FIRST TIME.

KEN MOREY stood in the infield of the crude half mile track which the newspapers had named "Morey Speedway" and lifted a big megaphone in front of his mouth. His face was plastered with sweat and dust. His once white coveralls were a gray-blue, saturated with the same dust, and the white helmet on his head looked like a ball of moulded mud. His eyes peered out of the mask of mud and looked at the tremendous crowd. It seemed that all of San Francisco was crowded into that little fenced-in oval. The rickety grandstands, uncovered, built of pine boards, groaned under the weight of a more than capacity crowd. The space between the outer fence and the infield rail which guarded the track was packed with standing spectators.

Men, women and children. Thousands of them. White shirts, straw hats—more formal attire, all mingled, and forgetful of the discomfort and the crowding. All with strained, aching necks and watering eyes. All of them quiet—hushed.

The roads leading to the Speedway were choked with parked cars. The line of cars was unbroken, for a mile or more, radiating from the oval. There was no hope of any car getting over any of the roads. The cars were parked abreast, completely blocking entrance or exit, and the police had long since abandoned any effort to direct parking.

The ears and brains of those thousands were filled with the continuous roaring and whining of motors. First, there had been the heralded race between the red Stevens and Bill Taylor's plane, with Morey driving as he had never driven before. Hurling the red car around the turns, smothering it in a cloud of dust, skittering along the fences, ripping splinters out of the fences on the turns with his wheels, grabbing the car out of the skids through a succession of sheer miracles, sending it thundering down the

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straightaways, flame stabbing from its exhaust stacks.

Lap after lap, the Stevens plunging into unsettled walls of dust thrown up on the last lap, until Morey drove through a swirling, billowing wave of semi-darkness created by the dust, and the spectators, watching without sound, felt hard lumps in throats which grew painful.

Round and around in that crazy race. Bill Taylor flying overhead, making the turns by banking steeply, so low over the ground that it seemed he brushed his wing tips in the dust as he horsed the Jenny in the turns. Bill Taylor, flying with a beautiful precision, keeping the rules, flying in the center of the track, no short cuts across the infield, the OX5 in his JND4 throbbing and pounding, the whip of his slip stream lashing the heads of the spectators.

Twenty laps—ten miles of that kind of thrill. The spreader bar of Taylor's ship hanging over Morey's head, and Morey, straining every nerve, taking reckless, insane chances, fought it out, lap after lap.

Until Taylor, leaning out of his cockpit, waved his hand as if in farewell at the end of fifteen laps, and really humped the Jenny around the oval.

He opened a lead. He won going away, two laps to the good.

He made his landing in the infield while Morey was wheeling his last lap.

THE crowd screamed, shouted, as the motor drone of the Stevens and the staccato hammering of the OX5 died away, leaving a thick silence.

Miller of the *Examiner* came up to the side of the Stevens.

"I caught you on three laps, better than the world's record," he said. "I made one lap at 49 seconds flat—the time you nearly went into the fence. That's the fastest lap ever turned on a half mile track!" He was puffing nervously on a cigarette.

"Well, tell 'em," said Morey. "What the hell, they pay for the thrills. Go out there and lift your baritone and announce that Ken Morey just broke the world's record for half mile dirt tracks. It'll give 'em a kick. It's what they pay dough for."

So Miller had taken the megaphone and made the announcement, and the crowd had shouted for a full minute, while Morey mopped at his face with a towel and pawed the grit out of his eyes and mouth.

Then Morey walked across the track and held a brief talk with Taylor and Jinx Jones. Jinx was dressed in white helmet and white overalls. That was Morey's idea. To make him stand out against the blue background of the heavens.

Taylor cranked the Jenny a second time and Jinx Jones sauntered toward the ship and took his place in the cockpit.

Ken Morey was a showman. He made no attempt to tell the crowd what was to follow. He walked back to the pits, and sat himself in the Stevens. His hands were shaking a little as he leaned on the wheel for support.

The Jenny lumbered across the infield and threw itself in the air. It climbed five hundred feet and circled the field. The motor was throttled.

There was a sudden, strangled sound from the crowd—a sound like a sighing moan. The eyes of all those thousands saw a white, graceful figure climb out of the front cockpit of the plane overhead, trot nimbly to the

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outer bay strut, stand there for a moment, waving an arm—and then stand on its head on the lower wing. The plane banked steeply, went around in a sharp circle, so that the white figure was suspended between heaven and earth.

When the wing came level, the white monkey climbed up the outer bay strut, pulled itself up on the top wing, did the cabane strut head stand, and then stood erect on the wing, arms folded, as Taylor went around in another bank.

The crowd knew nothing of airplane construction. The cabane wires were too small to see. They did not know that Jinx Jones had his ankle hooked around a wire. The crowd saw that a man was standing on the top wing of an airplane in flight—and the wing was tilted at a forty-five degree angle.

The little moaning, sighing sound of slowly drawn breath became louder. Here and there the yelping voice of a semi-hysterical woman sounded.

Then the white figure hung by the knees and ankles under the landing gear of the Jenny.

And wound up the exhibition by sitting in the middle of the top wing as the ship went around in a loop.

In the midst of that, fainting women slumped down in the crowd, a dozen of them, keyed up to a pitch unbearable, unendurable, witnessing the impossible.

TAYLOR landed. Jinx Jones, his dark face smiling, his black eyes shining, stepped up on the crash pads of his cockpit, waved his arms over his head. Bowed to the crash of applause which swept the field.

Then Ken Morey picked up his megaphone and strode into the infield. He came close to Jinx Jones.

"You sure you want to go through with this?" he asked tensely. "You don't have to. We can send 'em home mumbling right now. They're shocked to numbness. Any more would be almost too much."

"Sure I want to do it!" grinned Jinx. "Hell, they haven't seen nothing yet!" He went to work, attaching a flexible ladder made of cable, with rungs of half inch gas pipe, to the spreader bar of the Jenny. He spread the fifteen foot length of the ladder along the right leading edge. A patented hook, which could be sprung open by a tug on a cord attached to a spring trigger, held the manufactured ladder in place. The cord went up to Bill Taylor's cockpit.

Taylor sat in his seat and looked down at Jinx.

"Well, kid," he said slowly, "good luck."

"It's a cinch," scoffed Jinx. "Only be sure to pick me up fast when I grab the ladder, or I'll drag on the ground until you clear me."

It was then that Kid Morey lifted the megaphone to his mouth and bellowed at the crowd.

"Ladies—and—gentlemen," he announced in the midst of the hush. "Presenting Jinx Jones, that iron nerved, iron muscled daredevil whose exhibition of wing walking and aërial acrobatics you have just witnessed. The diablo of the Air! The Grinning Mephisto of the Upper Spaces! In the most daring, most heart cracking exhibition ever attempted. For the first time in history, ladies and gentlemen, you will see a living human being board a flying airplane from the seat of a racing automobile. A change from auto to plane, at the dizzy mile-a-minute speed of the race track. Swinging out into space, with only the nerve and strength of his own body between him-

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self and death, Jinx Jones will present the thrill of a lifetime."

He threw down the megaphone and ran for the red Stevens. Jinx was already in the mechanic's seat. He was rubbing rosin on his hands. He grinned at Morey as Morey slipped behind the wheel and headed the racing car out on the track.

"They're like the farmer looking at the elephant for the first time. He knew damned well there wasn't any such animal, even if he was looking at it. Those people are so hot and bothered right now that they don't believe what you told 'em—even after they watch me do it."

The Stevens picked up speed, raced around the track, left its cloud of dust behind, and the Jenny came in over the track, circled, put a wing down to hold the bank, measured the pace of the Stevens, hung over it, settled lower and lower.

The little moaning sound broke from the crowd again. Something fell down from the middle of the plane—a tiny ladder. It dangled over the car; now and then it bounced down and struck against the hood or seat.

Jinx Jones stood up in the seat. He grinned at Morey. "Well, here goes nothing!" he said with his mouth, but the frenzy of the two motors blotted out the words. He watched the gyrations of the dangling ladder with cool eyes. Once or twice he reached for it, almost tentatively.

THEN suddenly, his hands snatched at the third rung from the bottom. Snatched and held. He dragged his feet clear of the car seat. He hung, a crazily swinging pendulum, three or four feet off the earth.

The crowd screamed. His body was bumping through the dust, being dragged. Dust of the track spurted each time his body collided with earth. The seventy mile speed of the plane above whipped him this way and that, bounced him off the fence.

Then the plane dragged him clear of the ground, clear of the fence, went up and up.

He hung there for a minute. Then they saw his arms and legs move. He was climbing, rung by rung, slowly, taking a fresh grip with each step. After an eternity he was sitting on the spreader bar under the belly of the Jenny. He pulled the ladder up. It took all his strength to move it against the pressure of the slip stream. After another eternity he had it stowed so that it would not wreck the ship by dragging during the landing.

Then he climbed up over the landing carriage, went around the side of the fuselage, climbed into the front cockpit.

Taylor landed. The scream and yelp of the crowd was a racketing wave of sound.

Jinx stood up again, his feet on either side of the front cockpit. He took his bows.

Morey raced across the field. He saw that Taylor's face was white and his eyes staring. He saw that the white coveralls were ripped and torn from Jinx Jones' body. There was an ugly black bruise across Jinx's forehead and the bruise oozed blood. The hands grasping the side of the cockpit were bleeding, lacerated. Neck and shoulders, hips, legs, all lacerated, and with the dust of the track ground into the cuts.

Taylor's mouth moved and his throat worked. Finally he said: "Lord, kid. I'm sorry. I damn near killed you. I couldn't see anything.

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You were right under the belly of the crate, in the blind spot. I could feel the ship settle when you took hold. The added weight dragged it down before I could pull you away from the ground. I could feel you bump—up here—"

Jinx mopped the blood off his face with the rag of his right sleeve.

"Forget it!" he said hoarsely. "After we practice that a couple of times we'll never make a bobble. I told you it was a cinch."

"I don't see how you made it," said Morey jerkily. "After being bounced around like that, half-killed. . . ."

"Gee, boss," said Jinx, with that queer, reckless, enigmatic smile. "I found out that you've *got* to make it in this racket. You can't let go, even if you want to."

"I've seen a lot of guys, with guts and nerve to burn," blurted Morey. "Only right now, after that, I can't remember their names."

That mocking little smile moved Jinx's mouth. "Hell, I wouldn't churn that red sardine can you call a racing car around the track through a dust storm like that for all the dough in the world. I'm a guy that likes to see where he's going. I beat my way on a freight train to Indianapolis once, to see the five hundred mile race. Those guys are plain nuts. Darn fools are goin' to kill themselves some day. They can have it. I'll climb buildings and things like that for a living.

CHAPTER IV.

A DARING PLAN.

FOUR hours later, while the police were still swearing and sweating, trying to clear the automobiles from the roads around the Speedway, Morey, Bill Taylor and Jinx Jones sat in Morey's office.

Morey's stenographer, her face gaunt with fatigue and with big blue circles under her eyes, was monotonously counting money, sorting bills into stacks of the same denomination, piling quarters, half dollars and silver dollars in stacks. A five by three table was covered with currency, gold and silver. They sat there watching her. She had been the "ticket department" for the exhibition. None of them knew, when Morey assigned her to the job, that those thousands would storm the Speedway. Not even Morey foresaw the effect of the publicity, or the tremendous appeal of the news stories.

Morey and Taylor along with Jinx had escaped from the mob at the field by the simple expedient of climbing into Taylor's Jenny, and flying away from the scene. Morey had been worried about Jinx. The nasty looking lacerations needed attention and cleansing. So he abandoned the red Stevens to the mercies of the crowd, and with Jinx, crawled into the front cockpit of the Jenny. The overloaded, underpowered ship barely managed to clear the fences as Taylor stalled it into the air. They flew over the city and landed at Taylor's little field. They came back to town in a taxi, and took Jinx to a doctor.

The little office smelled of iodine and bichloride.

The girl in front of the money table drew a deep breath, straightened her cramped back, turned her head.

"Well, that's that!" she said dizzily.

"How much?" asked Morey.

She did addition of several sheets of scratch paper. There was awe in her eyes when she finished with the figures.

"Twenty-two thousand, four hun-

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dred and nineteen dollars," she announced. There was a little catch in her voice.

For a moment there was silence. Then Morey whistled, and Jinx Jones said: "You can't kid me. There isn't that much money in the world!"

Morey was grinning. He walked over to the table. There was a jauntiness in his movements. He took up a fistful of bills. He counted, took up another fistful, counted some more. Then he walked across the office to Bill Taylor.

"Five thousand dollars, I said, didn't I?" he said with mock unconcern. He thrust a thick stack of money into Taylor's hands.

"There you are, my man," he announced grandly, with almost hysterical elation underlying the grand tone. "Paid in full, and thank you very much. You can now buy six crates like that Jenny."

"What am I—a stepchild?" grinned Jinx.

"Santa Claus is making one trip at a time today, my boy. Don't be impatient. The line forms on the right."

HE stopped suddenly. "Don't you eggs understand what we've got here!" he snapped at them, his eyes shooting sparks. "We've got the biggest damned thing since the San Francisco fire. We've got an idea that will make more money than the Bureau of Engraving."

He stabbed at Taylor with his forefinger. "You said I was crazy!" he reminded. "Sure I'm crazy—and it pays dividends. You're sitting there with your fists full of the first dough you've had in years, wondering how you're going to spend it. You figure we pulled this off and it was swell—but it's all over now.

"But not me. Hell—it hasn't even begun. I can see things. Listen! I can see a dozen blood-red ships instead of one flop-eared, asthmatic Jenny. I can see 'em flying over towns and cities, where people have never seen an airplane, but where they've read millions of words about Richtofen, Immelmann, Luke, Rickenbacker and the French Aces. Read words about motors ripping up the skies, with pilots locked in combat to the death. Read about the Immelmann Flying Circus, and the Richtofen Flying Circus. Read about stuttering machine guns, and planes coming down burning and spinning. They've read all about that sort of stuff—but they've never seen it.

"Well, I'm going to bring it to 'em. The Flying Circus of the war front, right in their own backyards. The pilots who did the flying, right over their heads. Things they've never seen, things they won't believe when they do see 'em. A hundred fields in a hundred towns. Fairs, celebrations—with a Flying Circus as the outstanding attraction.

"A dozen blood-red ships, coming in over a city at twelve o'clock noon, putting on a free show, with a bigger and more thrilling show at the field in the afternoon. Press agents going in advance of the outfit, making the way clear for us, filling the papers with advance publicity, just as the San Francisco papers were full of our mangy little exhibition for a whole week! Pictures—"

He stopped, breathless.

Jinx Jones' eyes glittered and his face was taut.

Bill Taylor sat as if hypnotized, staring at Morey's face and charging body.

"Pilots—guys who heard the stutter of those machine guns; guys who

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fought it out head to head with Jenny crates. Guys who were trained to fly and fight. Dozens of 'em, haunting flying fields, eating their hearts out because there isn't anything left to fly or fight. Going around like ghosts, starving to death because once they get the dope habit of flying they can't go back to keeping books or selling automobiles or studying in schools, or whatever they were doing before the war fever got them, and they were trained to fly. I've seen 'em, you've seen 'em. Poor, proud guys. Once they were the gods the newspapers and the public made out of 'em. Now they are dumped back on earth . . . and earth to them is spelled h-e-l-l.

"Would they jump at a chance to fly a flying circus ship? Would they break their necks to get back a little of that sky they can only see now—but can't feel? You tell me!

"That's it — Flying Circus — billboards plastered with cuts of the stuff Jinx did this afternoon. Store windows stuck full of one-sheet three-color pictures of airplanes doing the nutty stuff we did this afternoon.

"We got more than twenty thousand people to a dinky little race track today — and we had one alleged airplane. We'll get fifty thousand, a hundred thousand on other fields, under the right auspices. . . ."

HE glared at them as if daring them to challenge him. The stenographer was on the verge of the jerks.

"It takes dough," said Taylor slowly. "Dough, and more dough—and maybe the Dempsey-Willard bout thrown in!"

"Sure—and I'll give it. I know when I've got a winner. I'll back it. We've got twenty thousand dollars here. I can get twenty thousand more by selling this business."

"What?" asked Taylor. "Sell the automobile business!"

Morey walked across the room. He snatched the telephone. He called the *Examiner*.

"Gimme the advertising department," he growled. "Take an ad: 'For Sale: The Stevens Automobile Distribution Agency with garage, workshop, parts, cars on hand, good will and show rooms. This business is worth a minimum of seventy thousand dollars. It will be sold tomorrow morning for twenty thousand dollars to the first purchaser answering this advertisement with cash in hand. Ken Morey has other important business.'" He slammed the receiver on the hook.

"Like helping the Allies dictate peace terms to put the finger on Germany's military powers," Taylor muttered.

Morey ignored his jibe. "That's how I'll sell the business. And every nickel goes into airplanes—a Flying Circus—good solid J-1 Standards that can take a beating and keep flying. Good one hundred and fifty horsepower Hispano-Suiza motors that can drag a crate up in the air with two passengers without danger of having the ship settle in somebody's front yard. War surplus stuff. Millions of dollars worth of it lying around, and we'll buy it for a song. Kelly Field, Little Rock, Harrisburg, lousy with stuff that never got to France and will never fly—till we make it fly. It's a cinch."

There was another silence and he paced, his eyes full of his visionings. He grew quieter.

"We'll incorporate. A regular stock company. I'll take fifty-one per cent, just to keep control and for my dough. I'll give you, Bill, twenty per cent. I'll

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give Jinx twenty per cent. For he's in on the ground floor. I'll give Hazel, there, nine per cent, just because she thinks I'm crazy. You'll be the Chief Pilot, Bill; you'll run the flying end. I'll take care of the business end. Jinx is the Chief Stunt Man—the spearhead of the show. It can't miss."

Bill Taylor said, very quietly, "What'll we call it?"

"Hell, that's a cinch," growled Morey. "We'll call it the Ace—get it—Ace . . . the biggest thing in flying . . . The Ace Flying Circus."

"I know ten guys I can get on a wire," nodded Taylor. "Ten of the best pilots in the Air Service."

"Stop talkin'—get 'em!" snapped Morey. "Offer 'em transportation here, and expenses while we're outfitting. I want this Circus on the road in thirty days. And in the meantime I got to get an advance man; he's got to go out, book the dates, get the fields, put up the paper, write the newspaper publicity, get Chambers of Commerce, Mayors, Governors, lodges behind us. He's got to go out and start the ball rolling before we have a ship ready to fly. That guy is going to be the most important egg in the outfit. He has to be a pilot and a damned good one . . . and a damned good newspaper man, and not afraid of hell or high water."

"The guy is Jim Alden," said Taylor in the same quiet voice. "He was in my outfit overseas. He's a hell-cat on wheels in the air, and he's a star feature writer for a big newspaper syndicate—knows everybody in the country."

"That's the guy!" declared Morey. "Get him . . . get him here right away."

"He probably gets a lot of money," reminded Taylor.

"What the hell do we care? Tell him the story and offer him double what he's getting. If he's a guy like you say, he'll throw that newspaper job out the window and be here as quick as a train can bring him."

It seemed that they were all standing up at the same minute, looking at each other. Morey, Taylor, Jinx and Hazel. The four hands seemed to go out at the same second—to touch—to form a magic square.

There was a sudden tightness, almost a choke in Morey's throat. "The Ace Flying Circus . . ." he said softly. "The World Famous Ace Flying Circus . . ." It was like a toast without glasses or wine.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Tons of Holes

SMALL attention is paid to the little holes which separate each United States postage stamp from the others, yet around the borders of the 12,000,000,000 stamps printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in this country during the past fiscal year, some 370,000,000,000,000 (370 trillion) holes, or perforations as they are officially named, were punched. The paper which fell from the holes weighed thirty-five tons!

—*F. E. Davis.*

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WONDERS OF THE WORLD

The CIRCUS MAXIMUS

"Where the citizens of ancient Rome assembled to witness games and contests"

EVERY town of ancient Rome had its *circus*, an amphitheater where chariot races and games were held. The shape of the arena was usually that of an ellipse, down the center of which ran lengthwise a wall, called the *spina*, where privileged spectators sat with their attendants who bore trident spears to prevent the wild beasts of the spectacles from breaking bounds.

The chief *circus* of Rome was the *Circus Maximus*, which was not circular as in the case of the Colosseum but oval-shaped. As rebuilt by Cæsar, it accommodated 150,000 spectators, but was constantly being enlarged by successive emperors, until it attained the magnificence shown above, and had a seating capacity of 385,000 people.

As Rome degenerated, the *circus* grew in popularity, and the rulers were continually being hard pressed to answer the cry of the debauched populace for "plenty to eat and free shows!" At the present time the *circus* lies partly buried beneath the earth of the Palatine Hill. Its form can still be discerned, however, from an elevated position, but gone are the marbles, the mosaic, and the bronze statues. A wonderful description of a Roman chariot race may be found in General Lew Wallace's novel, "Ben-Hur."

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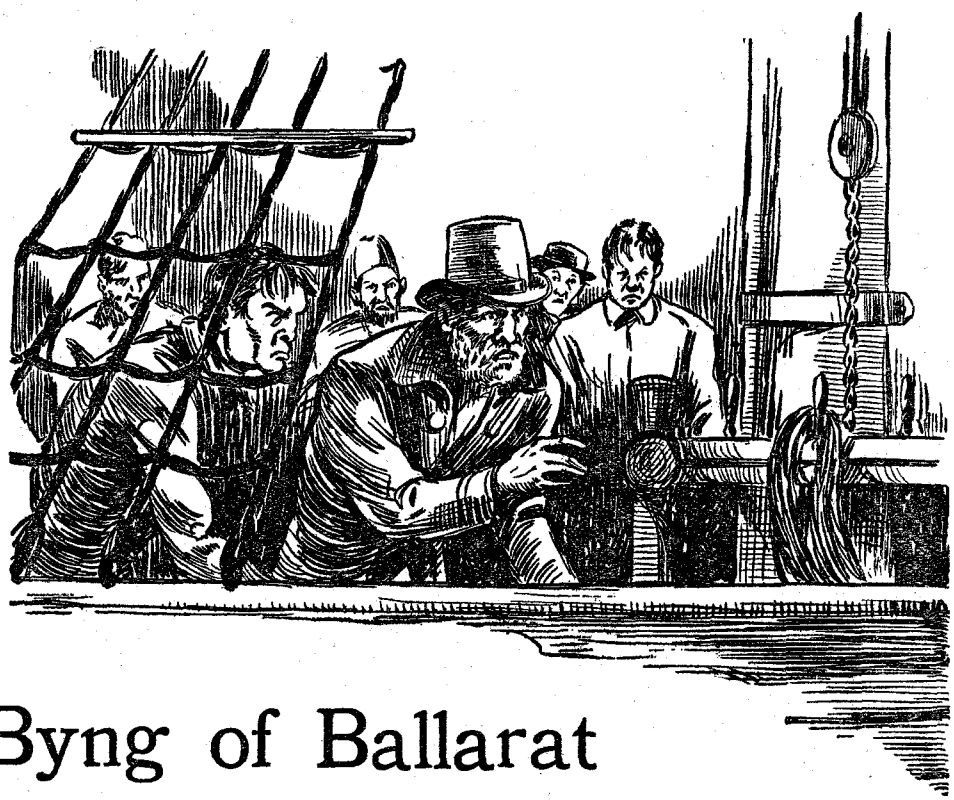

Byng of Ballarat

By ANTHONY RUD
Author of "The Red Scorpion," "Sorcerer's Treasure," etc.

Jack Byng had his choice—torture on a prison ship, or a struggle for life in the wild Australian bush

CHAPTER I.

THE GOLD-BUG.

HARD-HEADED, tight-fisted Thomas Byng, skipper of the Yankee paddle-box steamer Nancy B., died of a minor engine repair while his stout vessel, bound for Melbourne, was becalmed under full sail off the Kermadec Islands. True, Medford rum, the sweltering heat of the South Pacific, the hectoring of a shipload of disgruntled '49ers now bound for the new gold strike at Port William in the Antipodes, were contributing causes. Thomas Byng, however, always had been able to control everything save his twenty-year-old son and his own temper. The engine repair sent the latter out of bounds for good and all. It also was to make Second Mate John Thomas Byng into Jack Byng of Ballarat, freebooter of the bush.

When the Nancy B. was churning westward again, First Mate Thaddeus Moore and Second Mate Jack Byng held down the sixty-three bearded gold-seekers—men who had come too late to California, and who were bit-

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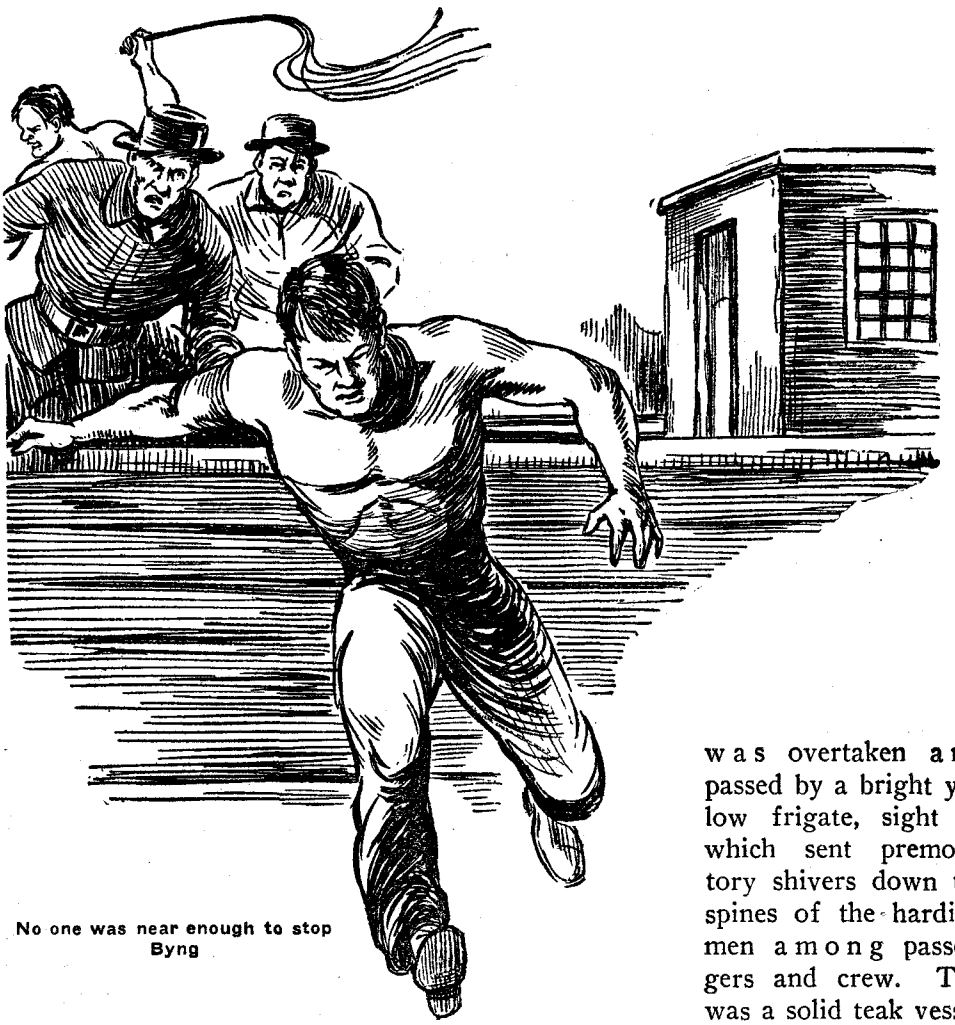

No one was near enough to stop Byng

terly determined to get in early at Port William—and in due time brought the ship through Bass Strait and into Port Phillip, which was the bay at the head of which was the infant town of Melbourne. Nine miles across the bay was Port William and the wild new land of promise.

Coming into port, the paddle-box was overtaken and passed by a bright yellow frigate, sight of which sent premonitory shivers down the spines of the hardiest men among passengers and crew. This was a solid teak vessel, copper-riveted and trenailed throughout, built sixty-two years before in 1790, at Moulmein, India. She was that floating horror, the Success, marked with broad arrows from stem to stern, and bearing the legend, CONVICT SHIP, in letters five feet high upon her side.

All unaware, she was making her final trip as a convict transport. When

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she dropped anchor that afternoon of May 24th, 1852, she would lose warders and crew to the lure of the gold-fields—and stay right there at Port William,* becoming a convict hulk like the other notorious "yellow frigates," Scarborough, Hugomont, Neptune, and Hercules, already riding there at anchor.

The Nancy B. followed into the bay, which was overcrowded now with the strangest, most heterogeneous array of shipping ever to drop anchor in any hitherto unknown port of the world. Here were sable lorchas from Timor, Dutch galiots from Java, Chinese junks, luggers, tartans, brigs, an enormous war sloop† now converted into a floating bank of deposit where miners could leave their pokes of gold, the yellow hulls dismantled of their top hamper, a barkentine from Cape Town, and actually a lateen-sailed xebec from Algiers whose black captain and five members of crew were feasted and presented with gold medals, by Inspector Price of Port William, for their bulldog courage in making the terrific journey.

All over the big harbor, like waterbugs, slid the tiny outrigger proas from the islands. With native crews, these were in great demand for swift transportation between Melbourne and the various points where gold-seekers disembarked on the western side of the bay.

WITH the rasp of rusty anchor chains on the Nancy B., there ensued shouting and riot—and what approached mutiny. The gold-seeker passengers did not wait to be lightered ashore, but hailed passing proas and bargained to be taken away instantly. It seemed to them that one second wasted now might break the golden spell of their fortunes.

Jack Byng had no quarrel with them. He was glad to see the last of them. But other troubles came thick and fast to settle upon his broad but youthful shoulders. One of the first of the crew to go overside into a proa with bag and baggage was the mate, Thaddeus Moore!

This leather-faced Yankee had cherished a grievance. Though paid a double "lay" on each voyage, he never had been allowed to buy in a share of the paddle-box. Now he had determined to woo greater fortune as a gold-seeker. Behind him came an even dozen of the crew.

"Look here, you can't leave me this way!" cried Jack Byng, his face flushing with anger. At the same second he realized that they could—and would. The crew, Yankees all save two "Portygees" from New Bedford, had signed articles for the voyage to San Francisco and the return around the Horn. The two extra journeys to Panama made by Captain Thomas Byng and his long voyage to the Antipodes were extras which had caused grumbling—easily put down when the bucko skipper himself was in charge. Now the law really was with the men. And in addition, one of the deserters actually was Jack Byng's superior in rank! Thad Moore did not have to answer to the lad, except as new owner of the Nancy B.!

"Go to yer cabin! Out of the way!" snarled Thad, showing snags of yellow teeth in a wolfish grin. "I paid off me an' the men yestiddy! Ye've got the ship, an' twelve thousand in good yaller gold—"

That was as far as he got. Jack

*Williamstown.

†The Nelson.

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Byng's mother had been half Spanish, and back of his hazel eyes a lurid temper not yet curbed by age flamed suddenly. Head down, fists flying, he lit into Thad Moore and the nearest three seamen with a savage onslaught.

Moore went down, his hawk nose broken at the bridge by a sledge-hammer right. And two more men fell, half-senseless. But then hoarse shouts of anger arose, and two men grappled with Jack, pinioning his arms. A third seaman in the rear snatched an iron capstan bar and brought it down upon the mat of curly brown hair.

Fortunately an upraised arm took part of the killing force of that blow, else Jack Byng's story would have ended before it had fairly started. But he went down, poleaxed, and a scalp artery spurted red upon the scoured planks of the deck.

That sobered the men. They picked up the unconscious Thad Moore, and then left the Nancy B. for the shore and the gold mines beyond just as swiftly as they could get proas. Left on board the anchored vessel were just Hank, the colored cook, and Peg Peters, a one-legged seaman unfitted for the rigors of a gold rush. These two carried Jack to his bunk.

An hour later, head bandaged and throbbing, he was on his feet again, able to smile a trifle dizzily. He bore no grudge, even against Thad Moore. If the gold strike here really had proved up to half that had been claimed for it, though, getting a crew for the States was going to be harder than needling seeds out of Bar-le-Duc currants.

JACK felt the thrill in the air. He ached to join the gold rush himself. At Frisco he almost had done this same thing in defiance of his father, desisting only because he had been promised the first mate's berth on their return to New Bedford. And that berth had meant marriage with his boyhood sweetheart, Letty Hanlon.

"Now I can't ever go," he growled to himself, hazel eyes thoughtful. "I'm over being a boy, for good."

He was thinking of his mother and younger sister back home. The twelve thousand dollars in the strong box below was theirs. The ship was his. He always had respected his father's strength and determination; but Thomas Byng had been too harsh to be mourned. Jack thought of him only when he thought of his worn and tired mother. He would care for her now, marry Letty, and send his sister Alice to a boarding school at Boston. . . .

But a sailor lives by the stars; and what is writ among them for his destiny cannot be altered by pious and dutiful resolutions. By the time Jack Byng might see New Bedford again, Letty Hanlon would be long married, with three husky tow-headed infants of her own. And Jack Byng would not care—then.

Black Hank served him a meal which he washed down with a flagon of Madeira, and felt better. Then he hailed a proa, and got his first flying ride at water level in the outrigger craft, admiring the magnificent physiques of the two Kanakas who sailed the proa skilfully.

Port William, or Williamstown, as it was beginning to be called, was a hodge-podge of tents and log huts. It already boasted three crooked streets paralleling the water front. Thus far Melbourne, grown to a more solid population of six thousand souls, had all the stores; but Port William had enough grog shops and barrel houses

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for itself and all the mining district. Red light houses, and foul tent structures where opium and hashish were smoked or eaten, made up all the rest; though at the east end of the Bourse, as the water front street was called, a huge, barnlike structure was nearing completion. This would house the Anderson Company, dealers in mining tools and hardware.

Gigantic aborigines — Parrabarras, Aruntas and others of the black tribes —stalked the street, wearing loin cloths and in some cases white stripes uncannily resembling the bones of their own flesh-hidden skeletons. These Stone Age children had no business in Port William, but they delighted in confusion and noise. Many of them were seven feet in height. They carried obsidian lances, stone-headed waddies, and boomerangs of heavy darrah wood—the same wood with which all London would be paved before another decade was past. Thus far white men had not troubled them greatly. The great expanses of mallee scrub of the interior were mostly unexplored.

Jack was first shocked to the depths of his New England soul, and then thrilled to witness the reckless abandon with which gold was thrown about. Gold was cheap, selling for about twelve dollars and a half a Troy ounce. As long as the alluvial diggings held out from Essenden to the Werribee River, claim owners could get it with less effort than ever had been expended in mining virgin gold. Men fought and died to get or hold claims; but as yet there was no thought of a coming scarcity of the metal itself.

IN the district back of the town there were over two thousand Chinese miners, some Malays, Dutch, Australians from Sydney and Parramatta, Americans, a few English from the islands, and a horde of convicts escaped from Van Diemen's Land. The latter stayed far back in the bush, changing their appearance gradually, and taking new identities, in hope of passing for freemen when their fortunes had been made, and time came to bluey.

Scamps and drifters of the sort called larrikins abounded. Jack Byng tried a number of these, standing treat at the bars, but invariably getting the laugh when he broached the proposal of taking ship with him for the States. What, work for twenty a month—dollars, *not* pounds!

Hell, for taking a turn tending bar here in a pub for twelve hours they could earn three pounds, get all they could carry to drink, and eat the best food in Port William. If a man actually wanted steady work, he could have it shoveling for a claim owner, or possibly sluicing. This paid an ounce a day in red gold dust, with found. . . .

At the end of three days, going back to ship each night, Jack Byng knew himself balked, no matter what he did. No human being not actually wanted by the hangman would ship out of Port William or Melbourne, until the day came that the mines dwindled and ceased to offer their golden plenty.

The joker in fortune's pack, as far as prospectors were concerned, lay in the price of an outfit for the bush. Most of the food still came from England, though kangaroos and the smaller wallabies abounded. A cartridge for one of the new breech-loading rifles cost about a shilling. A spade brought two ounces of gold. A barrel of coarse flour was worth a small fortune. Many of the crew of the Nancy B., who thought themselves well off with their wages untouched in

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their dungarees, were appalled to learn that they would have to labor for weeks before they would be able to invest in even the most modest outfit for the bush!

The last afternoon of his search ashore, Jack Byng was forced to surrender. For the time being he could not man his vessel. He was heavy-hearted with thoughts of his mother and sister. His father had shipped home money from San Francisco by a 'round-the-Horner; but what if that ship had been lost? Even at best, the two women would be unable to subsist more than a few months longer. Then that unutterable disgrace in pioneer New England—the workhouse!

Jack made what he thought was the best of it. He sought out Captain Ensley Victor of the war sloop Nelson. He found the captain ashore and drinking heavily with some of his officers, but still able to understand, apparently, and grant Jack the privilege of storing his father's strong box of gold in the floating bank.

What Jack did not suspect was that this British naval captain felt himself degraded forever by this duty of caring for gold in the new settlement, and only when half-seas over with drink could he attain a semblance of his old courtesy. When sober Captain Victor* was surly, fiendishly cruel, and given to fits of complete forgetfulness of the promises he had given when in his cups.

JACK returned sober-faced, and told Peg Peters of his plans. That evening he would row over to the Nelson with the strong box, so that Peters himself would have no more responsibility than care of the Nancy B. Peters and Black Hank could stay on board, drawing wages, until the time Jack could assemble a crew for the trip home.

Jack himself would have a try at the gold-fields; might as well do that as sit around and bite his finger nails.

"It's fine of ye, lad," nodded Peters. "I'd go along if I had two good legs. But I'll take good care of the ship, rest assured."

"You're a friend, Peters," said Jack quietly, clasping the horny palm of the old foremast hand.

That sunset he went below, opened the strong box, and there verified the fact that Thad Moore had taken to the penny—not without long and painful calculations with a quill, which he left in the box as a receipt—the exact sums due him and the men. As a New Englander with a conscience he would do this, of course, though in a horse trade or in the service of a captain bearing letters of marque, Thad doubtless would follow the code of morals of a Blackbeard.

An hour later, taking only the precaution of thrusting a loaded pistol through his belt, Jack lowered the small dinghy and rowed over the darkening harbor toward the Nelson. The converted sloop was still dark, save for riding lights.

Jack shipped his oars as he came alongside the war vessel. He could hear footsteps on the deck, and the voices of men. A torch flared, flickered, then held steady.

"Ahoy the Nelson!" Jack hailed.

There was something that sounded like a voiced alarm up above, then a cautious voice answered. "Ahoy! Who comes?"

Jack gave his name and his ship,

*The captain's name is fictional, though history's indictment of him is far worse than presented here.

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mentioning his conversation with the captain of the Nelson. In a moment a gangway ladder rattled over the waterways, and he gripped the end, fastening it to the dinghy. Then with the heavy treasure box strapped to his shoulders, he seized the ladder and climbed.

The instant he reached the top of his climb, reaching out a leg and arm, he saw that something was wrong. He tried to draw back, but two brawny arms clutched him and dragged him up and over the waterways.

"Look out!" he shouted warning, and drew his pistol. He had glimpsed in the eerie light of that single torch the fact that these men were masked!

He fired, as more masked men came to close upon him. Then for an instant, as one of his captors sagged at the knees, he broke free. But the seventy pounds of weight harnessed at his shoulders threw him from balance and he went to his knees.

That second four sweating, muscled sailors leaped upon him, one seizing a hand-grip on his four-inch mat of hair. In a space of seconds then his head was dashed against the planks of the deck, and consciousness left him in a blaze of black stars.

Like wolves these first freebooters of the Victoria bush fell upon his strong box and yelled with maudlin satisfaction as they added it to the treasure looted from the Nelson.

Balked in their search for honest gold, the freebooters had found an easier way.

CHAPTER II.

THE RUSHER.

Article VI:—Two warders with loaded rifles shall be posted either side of the forecastle head, and shall not relax vigilance. If a rusher seeks escape they shall take sure aim and shoot to kill. Howsoever, if a rusher survive, he shall be confined in the cell known as the Tiger's Den.

—Mainmast Regulations, Prison Hulk Success.

MERCIFULLY enough, Jack Byng knew nothing at all of the grim happenings of the following fortnight. That second battering of his skull had given him a case of concussion which kept him in a deep coma until the doctors, such as they were, despaired.

The authorities, headed by that human horror, Inspector Price of Melbourne, wanted Jack Byng to live. They did not know his name. They thought him one of the freebooters; and from him they expected to torture the names of his associates and accomplices.

Over on the Nancy B. two days and nights passed before the rather dull-witted Peg Peters even heard of the outrage. Then he did not connect Jack with it, deeming that the young mate had gone ashore, outfitted, and hit the new trail through the pillared white-gum forest, to the new gold-fields.

Returning drunk with his equally drunken officers and men, Captain Victor of the bank-sloop found the two watchmen he had left foully murdered. Left there on the deck unconscious—not dead, simply because six of the freebooters had known and liked Jack Byng—the captain found, as he supposed, one of the robber-murderers. Ordering Jack Byng ironed, and then attended by the ship's doctor, was the last half-sane command of the mad captain.

Sobering up enough to realize his own misfeasance and malfeasance in

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duty, Victor drank again and became wildly crazy. He shot two of his own men, then had gunners take their stations. He made them fire a broadside of round shot into the bush where the freebooters long since had disappeared!

Then, yelling maledictions on fate, Victor ran to his own cabin, swilled down brandy until his hand ceased to shake. Then he bit the muzzle of a pistol and blew out his own brains.

There practically ended Jack Byng's slender chance for freedom and exoneration. The only question in the mind of the notorious tyrant and sadist, Inspector Price, when he came to view the prisoner, was whether or not this unknown man could be brought back to his senses sufficiently to make torture any use.

At the moment, Price was dismantling the transport Success, and building the famous "black cells" wherein men actually prayed for the gallows as their only hope of mercy and surcease, the awful battle-royal pen known as the Tiger's Den, and installing all the torture devices his inhuman, cold brain could invent.

Twice daily, Price came to visit Jack Byng, who had been transferred to the shore prison hospital. The inspector had sent search parties into the bush, and had done all he could do. The freebooters had escaped, and with them 18,153 ounces of dust and nugget gold, plus £4,200 in currency—plus the $12,000 in gold belonging to Jack Byng's mother and sister. In all, the loot came to a rough total of about $260,000 in American money.

But Inspector Price waited with the cold malignity of a trapdoor spider, for the prey within his grasp. The official planned torture for this supposed freebooter which would make the Chinese Death of a Thousand Slices seem only farcical agony. This one would confess and give the names of the others who had got the gold. Oh, yes, he would plead for a chance to tell all!

SO, completely unaware of the grisly fate in store for him, Jack Byng came slowly out of the veiling mists of unconsciousness. He felt no pain, but his mind remained vague. Memory of recent occurrences was blotted out temporarily—perhaps forever. He knew his identity, but was sorely puzzled over the strange faces about him, the leg and arm shackles chained to staples in the wall. He thought he had been with his father, voyaging down to Panama.

The grim-faced doctor understood his condition, having had experience with amnesia resulting from blows on the head in many cases among these rough men. He told Inspector Price that the shock and pain of torture would profit nothing at the time. The patient would die, and probably would recall nothing more.

Inspector Price raged inwardly, but his face showed nothing of his thoughts. It was a peculiarity of this frightful man that because of his benign countenance, and the occasional whims of mercy—usually practiced where mercy was the least deserved—some men refused to believe him worse than just.

Just at this time a miner showed up in Melbourne with a heavy take of gold. He most evidently was a Yankee, and some of the drink dispensers recalled when he had landed—less than three weeks before! When questioned, he told a vague and rambling story of striking it rich, but could give no details. He did not even know the

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lava-basalt layers, and the "wash-dirt" formation of the diggings.

"That's one of 'em!" said Price to himself, and started working on the fellow, who called himself Helm.

The man had been on the Nancy B., but died under torture three days later, without betraying his confederates.

Price was pale and furious at failure. He set up an "inquisition ring" with himself at the head. Every miner who came in now with a take of gold practically had to account for every grain of it, and its source. There was no way at all, except the practically impassable route northward then eastward through the forbidding mountains to Sydney, that anyone could use to get away from Melbourne. All craft were held in the bay for lack of crews. Price could bide his time—and work upon Jack Byng meanwhile.

He began restrainedly, asking quiet questions regarding Jack's coming to Australia, where he had worked, and what he proposed to do. The youth lying there had a queer sensation. He felt an aura of wickedness about this kind-faced man. Instinct warned Jack to beware. He had emerged from much of the mental daze, but now decided to feign stupidity for a time—until he could smell out the reason for the shackles, at least.

Then, during the second fruitless interview, he saw a queer and terrifying thing. A prison lifer used as a trusty was mopping the corridor outside the cell in which Jack lay. The broken, dejected-looking convict saw Inspector Price—and stood absolutely motionless for a space of seconds. Then his scarred and ravaged face changed little by little into a mask of hatred such as the shackled youth never had seen on man. Through the bars of the door came a skinny arm, ending in a sort of talon—thumb and two fingers only. This human claw moved straight for the back of the unsuspecting Price's neck!

At that second, while Price was asking one of his quiet, probing questions, there came a sound of heavy voices and footsteps in the corridor. Instantly the arm and claw were jerked away, and the trusty resumed his menial labor. Price never suspected how close he had come at the time to a vengeance for his sins—a vengeance which would reach him later.

NEXT night, however, came a revelation. The next cell to Jack's was empty and unlocked. He was awakened in the dim, ghostly light of early morning by a shaking of his shoulder. He started, and might have cried aloud, but a talon of a hand clamped over his mouth.

"Sh-h!" came the almost inaudible warning. "I'm a friend!"

Turning as far as he could, Jack saw a crouching shape beyond the bars. It was the trusty who had been interrupted in his attempt upon the life of the inspector.

In whispering, blood-curdling sentences then the convict told what was in store for Jack Byng, suspected of being a member of the freebooter gang which had robbed the Nelson. The trusty had nothing for or against Jack himself. He was taking this means of balking a man he hated more than any other on earth—the inspector who had tortured him without reason.

Jack gasped at the awfulness of the accusation and the grim fiendishness of the plan to restore him to health and memory—only to torture him to death. He asked a few questions which the trusty answered bitterly. Then the latter thrust a long-handled, heavy-

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jawed wire cutter through the bars.

"Don't jabber no more! I'll 'oval' your irons. No use tryin' to get away from here; but mo'n likely they'll keep the same irons. They're takin' you to the hell-ship tomorrow. . . ."

Clenching the jaws upon the wrist irons and ankle irons in turn, the unknown friend bore down with all his weight and strength on the lever handles. Each of the circles of iron was bent into an oval. Through these, if the stratagem was not detected, Jack Byng might pull his hands and feet after a few minutes of struggle.

Hope flared above the horror in his heart. Only the parting warning, a repetition of the statement that because of triple doors and many armed sentries it was impossible to escape from this land prison, kept Jack from making the attempt that dawn.

"Nights, they's only two warders with guns on deck on each of the yaller hell-ships. Mebbe you can make it."

With that the trusty made his silent departure. Jack lay sleepless then, fiercely rebelling at this horrible grotesquerie of fate. He was remembering something about the Nancy B. coming to Australia, but nothing of his mother and sister, nothing of the girl to whom he had plighted troth nearly two years ago. And the fact that he had lost the small fortune which was to support his mother was yet to be remembered.

"I never was a robber, though, damn 'em!" he muttered to himself through taut lips. "I can see that inspector was just waiting, though. I'll fool 'em plenty!"

He was to taste one of the milder forms of torture first. When the following morning the doctor examined him he found the patient in an apparent relapse, dull, stupid, and inclined to go to sleep before finishing a sentence. The medico recommended that treatment on shore be continued; but Inspector Price only snarled beneath his curled mustache. He had waited. A taste of the cat and the sweat-box would bring back memory to this robber. They had proved efficacious with many malingerers in times past.

So Jack was made to get up, strip, and then don the "punishment band"—an iron harness fitting around the chest and over the shoulders, with two rods poking horizontally forward, to which the prisoner's arms were chained. In the course of a short time the arms became numb and excruciatingly painful; but when being taken from one place to another it was hopeless for a convict or other prisoner to attempt escape.

JACK set his jaw, and concentrated upon just one thing—concealing from his jailers the fact that his irons had been ovaled.

These underlings of the prison ship were sullen, bestial men. One of them spat in Jack's face simply because Jack had admitted being American. It was an odd fact, but the horrors of the prison hulks were blamed upon the United States of America. Before 1776, the colonial planters had been forced to purchase white convict labor for their plantations. After independence they all refused, and Britain had to find another outlet for her appalling number of convicts.*

*In addition, it was a fact, not so widely known but nevertheless true, that Great Britain (punishing the theft of a ham by seven years' imprisonment, for instance) offered to supply free of charge these petty-offender felons to the slave dealers of Morocco—*and the offer was refused by the black sultan, on the grounds of excessive barbarity!*

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Jack was taken to the Success. On the trip, and boarding, he photographed every detail in his mind. The prison hulk was surrounded by a cordon of buoys at a distance of seventy-five yards. Any person coming inside that deadline without first uttering the countersign in a loud voice was liable to sudden death at the hands of the warder guards on deck. These men were skilled shots who prided themselves, not in killing outright, according to regulations, but in maiming rushers and suspected intruders, so that the refinements of cruelty practiced on board later could provide the entertainment they relished.

When Jack Byng was driven on board the Success, a horrible stench was in the air, and a moaning sound sent cold chills down his back.

This was a mere nothing, however. A convict had been trussed to the triangle, that sinister object at the moment lying horizontal on the deck. There the wretch had been branded on the forehead with a great M—for "Malefactor." His offense had been throwing his nauseating victuals out of his cell.

Jack was able to see the entire upper deck. The Success was a small frigate to have earned her reputation. She measured 135 feet in length overall, and 29 feet beam. But under her hatches every cubic inch was utilized. A few cells for favored prisoners measured seven by seven feet. Ordinary cells were seven by four feet. And the punishment cells—!

Pending the attention of Inspector Price, Jack was put in one of these. He kept his original irons and was chained to a knee-high ring in such a fashion that he could neither stand up nor lie down. This "black-hole" cell was two feet eight inches wide, completely lightless, and ventilated only by two slits in iron each about the length and width of a man's index finger. Cases were on record of prisoners being kept in one of these iron coffins for the limit of twenty-eight days; but after this incarceration the convict never again walked upright.

HIS turn for attention on deck came that evening—for at 8 P.M. it was the custom to entertain the crew with the punishments meted out to prisoners, and the torturing of those from whom secrets or confessions were to be extracted.

Three shivering, groaning men were taken from cells at the same time as Jack Byng. To each of the four was attached an "anchor ball"—a seventy-two-pound weight each must lift and carry, or slowly drag along the deck. Because of the chains and this additional weight, the four were brought upward through the forward hatch by a lift that worked by means of a wooden wheel and an endless rope.

Once on the upper deck, they were greeted by bloodthirsty shouts from the assembled men who showered unprintable epithets upon the unfortunate quartet. If it had not been for ropes which held back the audience, there would have been violence.

Jack and the others, bent under weight of the anchor balls and the thirty pounds of chains with which each was encumbered, were forced to sit down under the rail, while a guard with loaded musket paced back and forth ten feet from them.

Twenty feet from where they squatted the three most dreaded implements used on convicts stood together. The yard-arm gallows, the Y-shaped triangle, and the infamous sweat-box. The latter was a cast-iron box opening on

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hinges, fitted to take a man standing upright. It had a grotesquely hideous face of iron, and suggested arms and legs, being much the same sort of instrument as the medieval Iron Maiden of Nuremberg, lacking only the inner spikes. But the sweat-box was just as lethal, provided more than a short period of torture was intended. A blacksmith's forge and bellows were connected by a hose, so that burning hot gases could be poured in upon the flesh and lungs of the victim confined.

Jack made his decision. The scarred wooden rail was at his back. He hunched about, managing to get the bowed body of one of his fellow prisoners between himself and the stares of the brutalized audience and the armed guard. Then he worked his wrists free of the manacles.

Then came Inspector Price and two burly ruffians, for the first of the victims. Silently the pale, benign-faced fiend placed a hand almost caressingly upon the shoulder of a man—not Jack Byng, however; he, being the most important, would be reserved till last.

The wretch designated, who was to get two hundred strokes of the cat, howled in a sudden frenzy and sought to hurl his chains in the face of the inspector. The anchor ball balked him.

"Fifty additional lashes!" announced Price coldly. The unfortunate was dragged away and lashed to the triangle. Back there Jack Byng burst into a cold perspiration as he worked savagely at his ankle irons.

One leg was free! The other—

Two heavy-shouldered seamen, each with a nine-tailed cat, stationed themselves to right and left of the moaning, pleading prisoner at the triangle. Then amid his *sharp* screams of agony, the blows were laid on methodically, Price, standing back, calling out the number. Back of him waited a physician. According to law, each culprit being punished must be examined after every fifty lashes; the law, however, did not insist that anything be remitted if the victim was found to be in a dying condition. . . .

But this particular man was in luck. At the third stroke, while the brutalized audience licked its lips at sight of the first trickles of blood on the white back, there came a sudden commotion. Jack Byng had leaped to his feet, put one hand on the rail, and vaulted overboard!

For a dumfounded second there was silence. Somehow this man had rid himself of chains and anchor ball, and was out there swimming for dear life and precious freedom!

"*Get that man! Fire!*" shrieked Price, losing his benign aspect in a second. Here was the prisoner on whom he pinned all hopes for a confession, and a recovery of the treasure from the Nelson, actually in the clear and with a ghost of a chance to escape under cover of night!

There were volleys of oaths, running here and there of heavy feet. Then muskets spat into the darkness, and small arms crashed flatly. But perhaps none of these shots was aimed. At any rate, Jack Byng, swimming under water for the first yards toward the deadline of buoys, had completely disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE BUSH.

ON the Success an ever-increasing uproar ensued. Flogging and other entertainments were forgotten. The ship's bell was hammered

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fast and hard, sounding a warning of attempted escape, over the harbor. On shore the alarm was heard. Torches flared, and armed men came running down to the water front.

Small boats were launched. The calm of early evening lay upon the harbor. This was a handicap to Jack Byng in one way, but a great help in another. If he splashed while swimming they might hear or see him. But anyone who sought him in a boat had to row; and the sodden, unwilling guards shirked real labor of that sort. The chill water cleared Jack's brain. He reached the buoys, passed them, then turned on his side. This long, quiet stroke would take him any distance, though possibly it was not as speedy as the breast stroke favored by sailors.

The Nancy B. lay about half a mile distant, somewhat nearer the foreshore. Jack turned for it. He hoped to get a dinghy, some supplies, other clothing, and firearms before taking to the bush. But this hope was doomed to cruel disappointment. When finally he swam up to the stern of his vessel, he heard two guttural voices above speculating on the reason for the alarm from the Success.

Inspector Price, in making sure none of the freebooters won a way to the sea, had stationed guards on every vessel in the harbor. Jack Byng had to surrender, or take his chance barehanded, in a sodden convict costume, in the inhospitable mallee!

That choice was no choice at all, Turning silently in the water, Jack set his jaw grimly for the long swim to shore.

Nearly an hour later, close to exhaustion because of the weeks in bed, he rose to his feet in the shallows and staggered ashore. The lights of Port William and the flickering torches of the searchers on the bay now were to the north and east. The incessant ding-ding-ding of the bell on board the Success came faintly over the still water.

"No time to stop—now!" the fugitive gasped. Pausing to smudge over his footsteps leading from the water, he gained the higher ground, where the pillars of the white gums rose like the façade of some limitless, one-storied Grecian temple.

For minutes then he crouched. Gruff voices had sounded behind him, and a torch swayed along the beach. If they found his track now he would try to sell his life dearly; recapture meant mutilation, hellish torture, and death anyhow.

The voices passed along. Jack was safe in the mallee—safe for just as long as he could exist without approaching other men. But throughout the diggings his description would be broadcast. Inspector Price would put up a munificent reward for his capture. Though Jack Byng did not know it, he was the first convict in three years to escape from the yellow hulks.

Gradually the effcts of his long swim began to wear away. His muscles ached with fatigue, but determination kept him forcing a way through the undergrowth until a sort of second strength came to him. He found a rushing stream, foaming over rocks. He flung himself down full length and drank thirstily, then doused his head and arms in the refreshing chill.

HERE was a narrow clearing from which he could read the stars. Setting a course straight for the interior, he plunged on. The shoddy convict trousers already were in tatters from the thorn bush; but they

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would go in a few days anyhow. He smiled savagely to himself at thought of the giant aborigines he had seen on shore. He would have to live now as they lived, fashion himself weapons, and eat his meat raw. He had heard of the North American Indian way of making fire by rubbing sticks, but put little faith in it.

When another hour of travel in the mallee lay behind him, he crawled into a dense covert of golden wattle, lay down, and was asleep in two minutes. The sun, not to be glimpsed down here below the giants of the forest and the dense underbrush where tree ferns and thorn made a close and confining ceiling only a few feet above a man's head, had been above the horizon for two hours when Jack awoke.

Almost at once a terrorizing thought struck him. The black-trackers! The aborigines of New South Wales, and those imported from Van Diemen's Land, were used in all the convict settlements for tracking down fugitives. These childlike blacks, simple of mind and rarely warlike except when urged by superstition, just the same were supposed to be infallible when once set upon a man's track.

Jack plunged westward, seeking a stream. When he found one he walked in the freezing water a good two miles before daring to emerge and seek food in the forest.

In the little river where he emerged were black obsidian rocks. He hammered these together until he secured two sharp edges which would take some honing and serve a time as improvised knives. Two round pebbles the size of potatoes could be thrown. Jack started after his first meal of freedom, thus equipped; but wasted the stones on wallabies, and had to return for more.

This time he killed a jack rabbit, and then a second one. Grimly ready to forego the daintiness of civilization, he managed to haggle off the skins, and ate his fill. The skins he scraped, though he could not cure them.

Of berries and edible roots Australia has practically nothing. The tree fruits, so plentiful in the north, were lacking here also. Exudations of gum from several species of eucalyptus were pleasant to the taste and served to ward off hunger, though they were not especially nutritious.

Jack spent the whole first day trudging on westward. He found a sapling which would do for a lance shaft; and then as he traveled on toward the setting sun he scraped away at the end. With the last light of evening he chipped a rock into a rude splinter for a head, and bound this tightly with raw rabbit hide. He knew that when this died it would contract, and bind fast, making a weapon with which he might kill one of the smaller kangaroos—or even a man, if he came against a single enemy.

THE season was growing colder; the winter of the Antipodes was almost at hand. Jack Byng endured shivering nights. Progressing a few miles westward each day, he found game in abundance, and tamer than near the seacoast. But fire was becoming a necessity, both for physical comfort and for the ashes which would allow him to tan the hides of his kills.

He had a bow and a quiver of rude arrows now. But the bowstring frayed and broke after a few shots. It needed careful tanning. He set himself with this bow and string, looping the latter about a pointed stick, to make fire.

Two whole days of striving passed,

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with only a little smoke and a smolder which he could not blow into flame, before he found some fat punk tinder which was just right. With the fallen, browned leaves of the everlasting evergreens, he at last achieved fire. And then he never traveled so far again, but what he was able to move the glowing coals, banked in ashes, starting the fire again the moment he halted.

Four weeks from the night of his escape found him clad in half-cured kangaroo hide, carrying bow, arrows in a limp quiver, and a stone hammer not unlike a native waddy. This last was a throwing weapon with which he bowled over a small game, attaining great accuracy. He had seen a native tossing a "jackaroo," or boomerang, and tried to make one. The magic was lacking, however. His scraped elbow of wood curved in the air, but erratically. He gave up the idea of using this weapon, unless he could make friends with some native and learn the trick.

Thus far he had encountered no one. The giant white gums, tallest trees in Australia, had given way to pines and the smaller varieties of mallee. Some rocky open country appeared, though near the streams which he was forced to follow, sub-tropical vegetation remained thick.

Jack's hair and brown beard had grown long. His strength had returned, and even increased beyond the solid muscularity of his shipboard youth. Except for the torment of a vagueness, a sort of curtain in his mind, he would have enjoyed this atavistic experience, conquering the wilderness of a new continent, and wresting from it a good living. Achievement of a sort came each day.

But the fact that vague shapes peopled a part of his mind—fantasms of people he could neither name nor see clearly—worried him. He could not recall why he had come to Australia, where his father had gone, or anything much of his own earlier life. Only San Francisco, the voyages to Panama, and then his experiences after awakening shackled in the shore prison, stood out clearly.

Always happy-go-lucky and headstrong, he hungered now for a comrade. No doubt he would have committed some rash, half-insane action had he remembered everything, and known that in all probability he was losing his boyhood sweetheart forever, and that his own mother and sister would know want because of the trip his father had insisted upon making to Australia.

But he had gone into the primitive; and even the half-seen people of his waking dreams were a great deal like the bunyips—monsters of the mallee—imagined by the Stone Age blackfellows.

ONE day he was followed at a distance of twenty paces by what he took to be a dog. It was a dingo. Just for the sake of companionship, the man threw meat to it and tried his best to coax it near.

In vain. The dingo snarled and leaped away each time he tried to approach. It had the treacherous and distrustful mind of a coyote, even though it looked like a dog.

During the weeks of striving for existence and safety from recapture, Jack Byng had decided to build a hut in some sheltered spot. June had gone, and it was the cold season of the Antipodes. He would make headquarters here until warm weather came again. Then he intended to strike north a long distance, finally east again, hoping to

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reach the new road to the interior, get through the Blue Mountains, and reach Sydney. By that time he probably would be counted dead, and forgotten.

But all unknowing he had approached within a half dozen miles of a new shanty town the name of which was to ring around the world, and thrill men to the marrow just as Dawson City would do in a later generation.

Ballarat! Center of the richest gold strike the world had known since Solomon sent his slaves to the mines of Ophir! A strike of alluvial *and* hard-rock gold which made Sutter's Mill and all of the Feather River district of California mere Chino diggings!

For building materials the youth could not consider logs, of course. He already had discovered for himself the "wattle-and-daub" method of making a windbreak. So now he located golden wattle, and then a bank of plastic clay, which was plentiful, and began the framework of a conical dwelling—so much like the actual *gunyahs* of the aborigines which he had never glimpsed that there must have been a suggestion somewhere in the materials themselves.

That habitation grew only as far as the framework. When on the third day of the work Jack Byng went down to the clay bank at the river, he was startled to glimpse a shadowy figure drop hastily out of sight in a clump of mournful-looking beefwood just ahead. A man! A thrill of fear and longing swept through the lonely fugitive. Was this an enemy? It looked like an ambush!

"Who are you? I'm a—friend!" he croaked out of vocal cords rusty from disuse. Then he went cautiously forward, hearing no reply. He gripped the shaft of his spear, ready for a hasty throw.

The bush rattled and a thunderous report sounded! A puff of black powder smoke came out of the scrub, and a heavy ball whistled past his left arm, plucking at the hide tunic which he wore.

Jack crouched, gritting his teeth, and sprang forward. Instant battle would suit him. One thrust of his spear—

Then he saw the bandaged, bearded and gory man who had fallen there, face forward—the aiming and the shot of his pistol evidently being his last remnant of strength. Face down, the stranger groaned. A red bubble grew from his beard and burst beside his mouth.

Jack frowned. From the back this looked like an old man. Anyhow, with a single-shot pistol fired he would not be dangerous. Jack took the weapon from the limp fingers and turned over the stranger, who groaned but did not open his eyes.

Then Jack gasped. This was a man he knew full well, old Sails—a sail-maker-carpenter named Getch, from the Nancy B.!

CHAPTER IV.

THE FREEBOOTERS.

GETCH was dying. He had been shot twice. One ball had shattered his jaw, while the other was in his chest. The bloody froth on his lips bespoke a wound for which no rude aid or surgery could serve.

Jack Byng saw that moving him would do no more than hasten the end. With hides, mattressed below with small branches of pine, the youth made Sails as comfortable as was possible,

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then brought cold water in a cup made of a tree-fern leaf. But in spite of gulping thirstily at the water, the wounded man did no more than mutter wild words about "tons an' tons of it!" and then groaned with his inner agony.

Details of that succeeding forty hours may be omitted—save for the one tremendous thing which affected Jack Byng. Old Getch never did recognize him, except vaguely as a friend of long standing. The sailmaker grew fevered before he came to any sort of consciousness, and talked incessantly, pleading with Jack, whom he called Bully, mistaking him for some early associate, to avenge his murder by freebooters, and save his claim.

"The only log cabin in Ballarat!" was one sentence repeated over and over. Jack gathered that Sails had struck gold, built a log shanty, and then as he was panning or sluicing the golden reward of his search, he had been set upon by a man or band of men, who shot him and seized his cabin claim.

Jack had never heard of Ballarat, but he knew the place could not be more than a mile or two away at most. No human being wounded like Sails could have traveled far in the bush.

"It's yourn! It's yourn! All of it!" yelled the old fellow, stopping to choke on the red foam, then bursting out again. "I give ye the gold! On'y, send some to my ol' wooman. She's pore...New Bedford..."

Sick at heart, Jack Byng suddenly recalled that bent old Mrs. Getch. He had seen her along the shore, dragging the willow basket in which she delivered clothes. She gathered bits of driftwood for her wash-boiler fires...

In that appalling moment, with only that pitiable figure on the beach coming out as clear as a cameo in his mind, Jack Byng suddenly gasped. He *knew* Mrs. Getch, but how? New Bedford...the name rang with familiarity ...Ah, God in heaven! Another bent old woman gathering fagots was followed by a girl in her teens, dressed in tatters, and holding a shawl over her head as the fierce and bitter nor'easter tore at her thin legs and body.

Those two were his own mother and sister! Mrs. Getch long had been forced to do this hard work of washing for the sailors; but his own mother?

Clenched fists flung aloft, Jack cried in horror and lack of full understanding. Even as he fought desperately to recreate further details of the picture, the whole thing faded out. He was left with no more than a certainty that Getch's wife was in want, and also Jack's mother and little sister. Funny, he could not even think of their first names. . . .

But just the same, if there was gold here in Australia, if the dying man's story held some grains of truth, Jack Byng was committed to getting that gold, and shipping it, somehow, back to these unfortunates in Massachusetts!

FOR the time being, and during the hours of Getch's passing and shallow burial there in the mallee, Jack wasted no thoughts on how he ever could hope to get gold past Inspector Price, the watchdog of Melbourne and Port William. The one big thing was to find this place called Ballarat, oust the claim-jumpers, and take possession in the name of those needy ones far away!

Leaving Getch, Jack wore the dead man's dungarees and boots, and carried the heavy single-shot pistol, a

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breech-loading .50 caliber Spencer with ten-inch smooth-bore barrel—a weapon inaccurate at more than thirty feet, but throwing smashing power into its three-fourths ounce of lead sufficient to stop an old man kangaroo in mid-leap. There were eight brass-and-lead-ball cartridges in a chamois bag, worn now at Jack's belt. He felt that old Sails would have wished him to take these accouterments which would help greatly in the search for the log cabin claim in Ballarat held by those murderous freebooters.

To the north, looking no more than a mile or two distant in the cool, clear air, lay a small mountain, solid green with the unchanging hue of the Australian forest which is almost all evergreen, but with a sloping crown of bald rock. Jack set forth to climb that nubbin of a peak, from which he could survey the country and no doubt sight at least the smokes of Ballarat.

That proved unnecessary. Jack had gone forward no more than half a mile, steadily climbing, though occasionally scrambling down through gulches and dry creek beds where the prickly pear was troublesome, when he halted—half raising his spear, which he still carried, in spite of the more modern weapon at his waistband.

"*Coo-o-o-o-e-e-e-e!*" It was a weird cry, the hail of the mallee which Jack was hearing for the first time. In this instance it was unromantic enough. A miner whose turn it had been to prepare noon dinner was summoning his partner from the digging. He spat tobacco, and turned back from the door to the smoking pot on the clay hearth of the sod dugout cabin.

This was the outfit farthest south of the "town" of Ballarat, which in that year was spread along nine V-gulches which once had been the beds of streams, in some geologic epoch before the land had risen to its present height.

Ballarat was one month old. Tents, sod dugouts, wattle-and-daub shelters shaped like tepees of the American Indian, and some hurriedly excavated caves in hillsides served for human shelters. There were no stores, only four barrel houses which did business under canvas roofs.

There were no streets, just footpaths over the hills and down the gulches, through the forests and scrub. Few outfits could glimpse any sign of their neighbors, each being dumped wherever the top rubble and dirt above the first basalt layer showed signs of gold. So whatever happened was the concern of each man and his partner. No law, not even that of Port William, had come as yet.

The gold in the dirt was free. That is, it consisted of nuggets, flake and dust gold. All this once had been in quartz, but the quartz had rotted under the action of streams, and the gold had been washed clean. The top layers of dirt paid a man good money to pan—if he could get the water, which had to be brought to the scene from a small stream two miles distant. Or the dirt had to be carried there and sluiced or panned. Many miners used the wasteful dry-panning; but the lower layers—particularly the great "wash-dirt" layer (in some places thirty feet thick) above bedrock—were so rich that it did not really matter. Later comers could make fortunes out of washing the tailings; what did these first lucky ones care?

JACK BYNG climbed in the direction of the voice. He reached a ridge, and down below in the gulch ahead bluish smoke of gumwood fil-

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tered up through the scrub. As he looked, farther down the gulch the figure of a man, bareheaded, clad in grimy trousers stagged to the knees, wearing no boots, climbed wearily out of a black hole from which the ends of a pole ladder projected. The figure, evidently exhausted with toil below ground, came toward the hidden watcher, then turned in to the cabin or dugout from which the smoke arose.

On impulse Jack Byng scrambled down and followed. He tingled at thought of meeting some of his own kind again—men unwounded, and able to converse with him as equals. Concerning the risk of recapture, he thought little at the time. The venture to which he stood committed was reckless enough to dwarf all other considerations, and the need for success paramount.

The sod-roofed hut, rising only two feet above the ground level, would have been unnoticed by a person fifty yards distant, except for the clay chimney sending up its clouds of gum-wood smoke. Jack grimaced at such a place for men to live—without windows or ventilation save for the open doorway. A stack of wood neatly piled stood on one side, however; and a savory smell of meat stewing with onions was wafted to the newcomer's nostrils. He was suddenly so hungry his voice croaked as he called, "Ahoy the house!" and walked forward slowly toward the dark, burrow-like entrance.

As if by magic a rifle muzzle appeared in the door, slanting upward at his head. From the darkness behind came the grim, suspicious admonition:

"Grab yer ears, stranger! Grab—an' *hold* 'em! 'Nen come on, but slow an' easy. Stop! What ye want?"

"I'm hungry. Lost my outfit," said Jack, tempering the truth. "I'll work for a meal and a place to sleep."

"Oh, ye will." The suspicion still was heavy in the claim-owner's voice. He apparently turned to address his partner, who appeared as a dim face in the doorway. "Says he's a sun-downer, but willin' to shovel for grub. What say, d' we feed 'im?"

The answer was inarticulate but apparently affirmative, for Jack was told to come ahead, still holding the lobes of his ears. He descended into the murk of the cabin, where for a moment he could discern only vague shapes. The hut dwellers, though, could see perfectly. One of them took his pistol, then searched him for other weapons. They left the clasp knife he had gotten from Sails.

"All right. Put 'em down. Set!" said the man who had spoken. He waved an arm at a shake seat of a log in a corner. Jack sank down.

He was beginning to distinguish details. One of these men was small and wiry, with sandy hair and blue veins knotted at his fleshless temples. The other, the one who had been down in the mine shaft, was coarser; about the same medium height but heavier. Both were in late middle age, and had the sour, suspicious cast of countenance which stamped them either as escaped convicts or new-frees.*

THE thin man with the rifle began a brief interrogation, his voice still edged. "You one of Crosbie's larrikins?" he demanded.

"Never heard of Crosbie," said Jack, shaking his head. "I come lookin' for Ballarat, and lost my swag."

*Men who had served sentences, but who had not been able to leave the colonies.

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He did not elaborate.

"Well, you're in Ballarat—such as it is," said the thin man. "You can work for us, if you want to. Only, we keep your gun till you're ready to go. 'Member, if you're one of them bush-rangers or freebooters, you eat hot lead an' no argyment!"

"Suits me," nodded Jack. "Now—Lord but those onions smell like heaven to me!"

After the hearty but simple meal, washed down by boiled tea, Jack was taken to the shaft. This was only some fifteen feet deep, but the first job of shoring with timbers was half completed. Most of the dirt excavated lay in a big pile at one side, waiting to be washed or carried to the river.

Jack was set to helping the pair below ground. He learned that the thin man was called Billy Dent, while the more silent, stronger fellow was Stan Warshawski, a Pole. The newcomer, who had resolved to work here until he could learn a little of conditions in this gold-field, and more about the freebooters so evidently feared, pitched in and did more than his share of work.

Billy Dent eyed him with an equal mixture of admiration and distrust. Workers were hard to get. If this new man would stick until he earned an outfit, the partnership would benefit by many hundreds of dollars—perhaps thousands, for this claim was extremely promising at the high levels.

Tea and damper, with cold wallaby meat previously roasted in a clay coat in the coals of the hearth, came shortly after sundown. Then Jack Byng began to get restless. The partners heaped fuel on the fire and in spite of the open doorway the sod hut grew unbearably hot. Jack finally had to say he would sleep outside. He had left his skins and spear in a heap back there on the side of the gulch.

Though the partners glanced significantly at one another, they let him go. In the moonlight, they saw him come back and lie down in the shadow of the brush about twenty yards from the hut. In five minutes Jack Byng slept. He was used to this, although the night was chilly. It would take him a long time to get used to stuffy quarters again, even with his prison experience.

The mine partners kept awake as long as they could. Finally, near midnight, Billy Dent crept out noiselessly, rifle in hand. He approached the huddle of hides there in the bush, and was manifestly astonished to find Jack still there, breathing deeply and regularly in unfeigned sleep. He had suspected Jack had been a scout for the bush-ranger Crosbie, now head of the infamous freebooter band of Ballarat; and that at the first chance Jack had meant to slip away, bearing news of this promising claim.

What Billy Dent and the Pole thought then did not really matter, in view of the grim happening which came at false dawn. Stan Warshawski had drunk too freely at one of the barrel houses one night, boasting of the richness of their claim. And there were men in Ballarat who heard, and whose eyes slitted with covetousness.

Now, keeping to shadow, crossing into the brightness of the westering moon and the vague gray of eastern sky only when just at the side of the sod hut, two crouching figures came. There was a slight sound. A fagot of firewood was dislodged from its pile, and tumbled with a rattling noise.

"Uh! Who's that? You, Jack?" came a sleepy voice from within the hut.

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The men outside did not answer, but crept more swiftly toward the doorway.

JACK came to his feet, fairly blasted from sleep by the detonation of heavy pistols. Seizing his lance, he stared toward the sod hut—in time to see orange fire spurt from the doorway, and two answering fire arrows start from points just three or four yards distant. There came a terrible shriek of agony as Stan Warshawski pitched down, clutching his mid-section and writhing.

The partners were beset by the freebooters they feared! Jack ran to help. He saw just two attackers moving to the door, from which no shots came now. With a terrifying war whoop he sprang at the first, burying the spear deep as the marauder turned to fire in sudden panic at this unexpected reinforcement.

Dropping the haft, which he knew he could not loosen, Jack leaped on toward the second assassin. A pistol blazed almost in his face, one of the new repeating sort which fired six times without reloading. The bullet missed, however, and he struck that intending murderer in a tackle that had all the weight of his rush behind his bunched shoulder.

Crash! The man went down, bowled backward so heavily that his head smashed into the woodpile, half stunning him.

Still his left hand flew to Jack's throat, and he struggled. The youth, seeing in his mind a picture of Sails, butchered for a claim like this and dying in delirium, broke the throat hold and grabbed for the same thing himself.

The robber tried to yell for mercy now, but only choked sounds came forth. Then they too stopped, and there was only the sound of his heavy boot heels d r u m m i n g on the ground. . . .

"My God, Jack!" said a weak, protesting voice near him. The hand of Billy Dent shook his shoulder. "You can let him alone. He's been dead a long while. Come help me with Stan. I'm afeared he's done for. They pinked me in the shin. One of the bones is busted, I think . . . but if it hadn't of been fer you . . ."

With an effort, Jack detached his clamped fingers These were the first men he ever had killed, and he felt sick when he staggered up to his feet. The first freebooter lay where he had fallen, the rude spear sticking out from his armpit and transfixing his heart. This one and the other stank of rum.

"They're Crosbie's men, all right," said Billy Dent bitterly. "They hole up mostly at a log cabin north of here. Nights they drink, an' anybody goes near there gets shot. They've took to killin' honest men they think maybe have pokes of gold."

Jack Byng's face was white and set as he stared down in pity at the now unconscious and dying partner of Billy Dent.

"Those men in the cabin—they're the devils I came to Ballarat to kill!" he said between set teeth, fingering the six-shooter he had taken from the second freebooter.

Billy Dent protested, anxiously saying that he needed a partner, and that he himself was wounded and would not be able to get around much for several days.

He started to wash and dress his leg, after seeing that nothing could help Warshawski. His voice trembled, and he was near to tears though not from his hurt.

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"I won't go till you're all right," promised Jack. Then he suddenly stiffened. From far away, borne on the still air of morning, came the sound of heavy voices raised in song. There was little tune, and the words were indistinguishable, but at this time of night the idea was unmistakable. Men had been drinking all night, and were at the height of their carouse.

"That's them!" said Billy Dent bitterly. "They'll kill you too. Then where in hell 'll *I* be?"

"They won't!" said Jack Bying harshly, thinking of those women and the girl gathering fagots on the shore. "From now on I'm going to be just too tough to kill!"

CHAPTER V.

THE GOLDEN SCULLION.

THE foray of the two freebooters, however, had been no mere outburst of drunken cupidity and ugliness. Though he was scarcely known by sight to any man save the larrikins and bushrangers of his own band, Warren Crosbie was a cold thinking machine—one which thought always in terms of violence and evil, or he might have been a great man in this colonial empire. With a tremendous fortune already in his hands, he was under the necessity of preventing his men from taking their splits until it would seem honest money gleaned from the rocky soil.

Holding in leash the rascals he had brought together in Ballarat meant keeping them busy. If a few of them each month were exterminated while on this business bent, why, so much the more in shares for those who survived.

So each night when a claim was known to have been producing gold in quantity, masked men raided. Crosbie himself rarely went. And he issued stern instructions that no troublesome survivors were to be left behind, to raise popular indignation after the robbery. As a result Crosbie's cached fortune increased, while the men under him who would share it had diminished to five (now that Black Dog Ramele and Dinger Doane failed unaccountably to return from that easy raid on Billy Dent and his Polack partner.)

Warren Crosbie himself decided to investigate. He went the second morning, in broad daylight; and he gave the warning *coo-o-o-ee* before he descended to the sod hut where Billy Dent lay smoking comfortably while his brown-bearded friend worked in the shaft.

In the bottom of the gulch a hundred feet below the mine shaft was a mound of new dirt—a mound about six feet in length. The freebooter chief noticed, and his eyes slitted momentarily. But he was smiling, at ease, when he reached the doorway of the sod hut and was bidden to enter by the anxious voice of Billy Dent.

Jack Byng had come up the ladder, stopping just short of the surface to listen, then peering out cautiously before revealing himself. Thoughts of the law were in his mind. The law had treated him scurvily back there at Port William; but in this instance there might have to be some explanation of the death of three men. And his own identity would be revealed thereby in disastrous fashion.

He had his single-shot pistol, preferring a weapon with which he was familiar. The six-shooter revolver might be all right, but he never had fired it. Now, tucking the pistol into

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his waistband, he climbed out of the shaft and made his way silently toward the side of the dugout into which the visitor had disappeared. And although he strained his ears, when he finally drew close, he heard no conversation at all. That was an uncanny thing, for Billy Dent was a talkative man.

"I'm Sergeant Armstrong from Melbourne," had been Crosbie's words of greeting a few minutes earlier, when he stopped and entered the dugout. "We've come to bring order to Ballarat; and a report came to me that night before last there was shooting up in this direction. Do you know anything about it? You are Billy Dent, aren't you? Where is your partner?"

Billy Dent put down the revolver he had been clutching, and swung his bandaged leg to the floor. "Oh, it was awful!" he replied, shaking his head, tears coming to his eyes. "They killed Stan—two of Crosbie's gang. We—we got them. They're buried out there. . . ."

HE raised a bandanna handkerchief to wipe his eyes; and that second Crosbie leaped. His pistol flew upward, then down in a crushing smash upon the little man's skull. Billy Dent fell back, dead.

"Couldn't leave *you* around to talk!" gritted the bushranger, wiping his gun and thrusting it back in its holster. Then in silence he frowned about the hut, wondering where these two had cached their gold. Might be in those rusty air-tights on the shelf.

Just as he reached a hand for one of those tins, a shadow darkened the open doorway. Staring in at the quiet figure on the rude bunk, hand on his pistol butt, was a bearded man stained with the soil of the mine shaft.

"*What did you do to him?*" came the hoarse, ominous query.

Warren Crosbie did not waste words. Whirling, he hurled the heavy tin, which struck the dirt wall, splashing reddish yellow upon the floor and across Jack Byng's bare feet.

At the same time the bushranger went for his gun. It flashed upward in a lightning draw which Jack could not have hoped to equal—save that his own hand gripped the pistol butt when Crosbie declared himself in action.

He yanked the heavy weapon and fired point-blank, perhaps one-fifth of a second before the outlaw's gun jerked convulsively upward, throwing its charge of lead into the sod roof a foot above Jack's head.

From Crosbie's bare throat blood spurted sidewise. He staggered, clutching at the gaping wound in a vain attempt to stem the lifeblood stream. The revolver fell with a clatter against the hardened clay of the hearth. And two seconds later Warren Crosbie, choking, pitched head-first toward the bunk on which lay the body of his victim. Another twenty seconds and he was dead.

Jack had no idea of what he had done. He knew only that he had avenged the senseless murder of his partner, and rightly guessed that this man in the black suit and expensive boots had a close connection with the two masked men who had raided.

A search of the murderer's clothes yielded no money, but one exceedingly interesting packet. In this packet was a rough map of Ballarat, showing about one hundred and sixty claims. Beside twenty-two of these, red crosses had been marked. A red interrogation point was next the southernmost of all the claims—the one Jack realized had belonged to Billy Dent

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and his partner. So, this man had come to see what had happened to the other two, had he?

"They can tell him—in hell!" grated Jack aloud.

He was looking now at a collection of reward notices, all hand-lettered. These described wanted men. Some had been taken from Sydney, but most were the work of Inspector Price of Melbourne. There were eighteen notices in all. One of them offered £3000 for the capture dead or alive of the notorious bushranger Crosbie, who was thought to have escaped south to the new diggings in Victoria.

Then Jack Byng grew rigid. Inspector Price had discovered his identity, after all! Here was a terse description, with his full name, John Thomas Byng, and a reward of £2500 offered for his capture! And then the significant words: "THIS MALEFACTOR MUST BE BROUGHT IN ALIVE!"

THAT tore it forever. Jack swore aloud and reached a hand upward to his head. Red blazes suddenly flashed in his retinas. He leaned against the wall, suddenly sick and weak. Something more terrible than death had happened to him. The veiling mists had been driven from his brain by shock!

He remembered Letty Hanlon, his sweetheart! He remembered his own mother and sister, the death of his father—and now the full horror of his position, robbed of the money which would have meant safety for his dear ones, robbed of the chance to take his ship, the Nancy B., away from these hell-ports and earn a living for the girl he had hoped to make his wife, burst upon him.

He never could escape save by fleeing farther into the mallee! He never could take back money for poor Mrs. Getch, even.

It was a killer who left the sod hut fifteen minutes later, a harsh-featured avenger who carried a revolver and a pistol, and who was bound straight for the cabin built by Getch, and the murderous bushranger Crosbie, supposed to have headquarters there.

Jack carried about ninety ounces of dust. This he would send to Billy Dent's or Stan Warshawski's people, if he could find out who any of them were—and if he survived. Going on to the gulch shown by the freebooter's map as the place of the log cabin —it was less than a half mile distant —Jack made no real plans beyond the smoke of his guns.

Ballarat lived in terror of these murderers. Very well; if he could capture any of them he would turn them over to the other miners for trial and justice, while he himself disappeared. There was little likelihood of surrender, though.

He came upon the log cabin suddenly. It was a tiny affair, no more than ten by ten feet in size. Smoke was rising from the chimney. For a moment, until he cautiously circled, glimpsing the front and far side, Jack was puzzled to imagine how a freebooter gang could make headquarters in such a cramped dwelling.

Then he understood. On the south side the newcomers had erected a sort of *lanai* on poles—a roof of saplings overlaid with tree fern leaves and then dirt. This offered some protection against rain and sun. It covered the mouth of the mine shaft, and furnished a place where men could play cards, drink and sleep when the weather was fine.

Two bearded fellows, unkempt and

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dirty, slouched over a rough table covered with a blanket. On this stood a bottle and glasses. They played a game called "sixty-six," and growled morosely over the sixes and four-spots used as counters. Behind them two more men were wrapped in blankets, snoring. All wore pistols or revolvers, and most of them knives in sheaths.

Inside the cabin a fifth member of the band limped about barefooted, getting ready the noon meal. He was a white-faced, forlorn specimen with drooping shoulders, and with one red eye socket from which the orb had been gouged recently. Thaddeus Moore had cast his lot with the freebooters one night when half drunk and resentful of the fact that his thriftily-saved wages did not suffice to outfit him well for a mining venture in the mallee. Twice since then he had tried to break away from Warren Crosbie, and had taken horrible beatings as punishment. The last indignity was making him cook for the outfit. Even at that he had learned to fear the cold-hearted chieftain too greatly to try to break away a third time.

JACK managed to get within twenty feet of the card players. Then he rose to his feet, pistol and revolver couched at his hips, and strode straight to the *lanai*.

"Stick 'em up! Quick!" he rasped.

Oaths of astonishment greeted him. One of the sleepers grunted, and got up to a sitting position. Jack barked a savage command at him. Unwillingly he and the two card players stood up, holding their arms aloft. Jack pardonably missed the fourth man who had been sleeping, and who was screened from his view by the table.

"Which one of you is Crosbie?" came the harsh demand.

"Crosbie?" frowned one of the players, seeming to try to think. "None of us here, pardner. What's the ail of you? Never heard of no Crosbie nohow—oh-h, you mean the *bushranger* Crosbie?" His red-rimmed eyes stared questioningly at Jack.

"Yes, I mean the murderer Crosbie!" said Jack coldly. "Which one of you—?"

That was as far as he got, for two things happened simultaneously. The fourth man who had been sleeping had awakened to the fact of a hold-up. Lying there, he could see Jack Byng's booted feet and the legs above. He got his revolver, aimed, and pulled trigger three times as fast as he could thumb back the hammer!

The other thing that happened saved Jack's life for the moment. Out of the cabin door, skillet in hand, had come the limping Thad Moore. He saw the stranger with guns, the freebooters with their hands aloft. And he flung the skillet with its hot grease! He feared Crosbie more than he feared any other man, or even the law.

The skillet handle struck Jack a staggering blow on the shoulder. He lurched sidewise and forward. At the same instant two searing burns came —in his upper thigh and higher on his right side! The bushranger on the floor had scored two hits!

The two card players and the other freebooter streaked for their guns, at the same time leaping away from the table. Jack fired down left-handed with the pistol at the man half-raised from his blankets, then swung with his back to the cabin.

Crash! Crash! Crash! he fired thrice, missing the first shot with the strange weapon, then getting hits on both the men who had been playing cards as they themselves fired hurriedly.

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There came a screech from Thad Moore. A ricocheting bullet had scoured his scalp, inflicting a painful and bloody but non-dangerous wound. He sat down suddenly on the ground, half believing his brains were oozing out through his fingers.

Jack flung himself to the ground. He had scarcely felt the scratch wounds. He turned and fired once, missing—but scaring the last of the bushrangers sufficiently so the fellow yelled for mercy and rose to his feet, starting to put up his hands.

Jack could not halt his trigger. He flung a bullet squarely into the pleading man's heart, and the bushranger pitched forward as a tree falls.

That was all—except one factor Jack could not help. One of the two card players had been shot through the right forearm. He was hurt and out of action, but nothing was the matter with his legs. He suddenly got up and darted for the bush. Jack fired, but missed.

The freebooter escaped. He did not stop running until he was far from Ballarat. He never would return. When weeks later he got to Melbourne he would tell a wild and weird story of this bushranger who had killed his partner and driven him from a claim. From his description, compared with the reward posters, Inspector Price would curse and declare this new outlaw to be the man he wanted to lay hands upon, above all others; namely, John Thomas Byng!

WHAT ensued thereafter at the cabin takes, perhaps, an understanding of New England character, if all is to be plain.

Jack was losing blood from four slight wounds, but managed to stagger over to the freebooter sitting on the ground.

"Where is Crosbie? Are *you* Warren Crosbie?" Jack demanded hoarsely. Then something familiar about the long white face, in spite of the empty eye-socket and the streamers of gore from the scalp wound, struck him.

"You! Thad Moore!" he gasped. "Damn you, you're going to die! Say your prayers, if you got any!"

The ex-mate did not flinch. A queer sound of resignation came from his throat. "Jack Byng! Jack Byng!" he said in a wondering, queer monotone. "I—hell, I don't blame ye, lad. Go ahead an' shoot!"

And with that he sighed and collapsed to the ground.

Still savage, but unable to kill a man who did not resist, Jack dragged Thad into the cabin and laid him on one of the bunks. The noon meal for six was smoking on the hearth, and took his attention immediately. Then he washed and bound his own wounds, and put a compress on the jagged tear on Thad's scalp.

The latter woke up, and lay there minutes before he spoke.

"You're a good lad, Jack," he said then weakly. "Better git. Crosbie'll be here soon."

Instantly Jack bristled. "Where'd he go?" he demanded.

The ex-mate told, and Jack realized for the first time that the murderer of Billy Dent, who now lay dead back there in the sod hut, had been the New South Wales bushranger, leader of this freebooter gang!

"Well then, he won't be coming back," said Jack grimly, and told in brief what had happened.

"Oh, glory be!" breathed the ex-mate fervently. He sat up, instantly interested again in living. "I—oh Jack, I been in hell here! He—he was—"

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"Looks to me as though you deserved all you got!" said the youth uncompromisingly. "You're not through paying, either!" An idea had come to him in a flash. Here was a possible chance to send money to Mrs. Getch and his own mother!

"Wh-what d'ye mean, lad?" quavered Moore. All the iron and whalebone had been ground out of his spirit.

"I mean that this claim was supposed to be rich. It belonged to old Sails—Getch, you remember. Well, Sails asked me to send some of the gold from this claim back to his wife. She takes in washing there at home. Well, you and I are going to work fast. We'll try to get some gold for Mrs. Getch, and then some to keep my mother and sister from want.

"And then you're going to take it back to them, Thad Moore!"

"You mean—you'd let me—you'd trust me to—" began the broken man in a trembling voice of hope.

"I'll trust you when you swear an oath," said Jack. "There'll be some for you too, I hope. I can't leave; but you'll do what I make you swear, or I'll harry you in hell, Thad Moore!"

THERE was no difficulty about that, at all. Thad would have given his one remaining eye for a chance to get out of the Antipodes, even penniless. And he knew something about this "rich claim"—something he started to tell Jack, but then thought better of it. After all, why quarrel with the largess of the gods?

"Crosbie's made us work this claim some. There's a mort of gold a'ready!" said Thad, indicating a row of biscuit tins.

Jack frowned. "You mean, don't you, that Crosbie put the gold he and his men stole in those tins?" he demanded.

"Lord, no! Crosbie had his own cache f'r that," responded the ex-mate, telling the truth feverishly—a part of the truth. What he did not ever tell Jack Byng was that the gold dust from the Nelson had been dumped into the wash dirt of the mine excavation, and mixed there with some of the real dirt. "This-here gold come out of Getch's mine!" he concluded. "I'll swear that on my sacred honor!"

Jack was ready enough to believe, particularly as he knew Thad Moore of old as a man who stuck to his pledged word. Like many another New Englander of strict upbringing, he might avoid lies by the narrowest of margins, and purposely; but when pinned down in plain words he told the truth and acted strictly according to the promises he had given.

So when next day Thad said he could travel, Jack burdened him down with all the wrapped gold he could carry in addition to a meager store of provisions, his weapon and ammunition.

"Put on ten pounds more!" bade Thad stoutly, when he was ready for the trail. Jack did so. That made almost one hundred pounds of the metal —in Melbourne, about $20,000 worth. Back in America the metal would bring more.

"You will take the identity of Billy Dent," Jack reminded him in parting. "This gold came from your claim, of course. You will take it to New Bedford as soon as you can get away. One-third goes to Mrs. Getch, one-third to my mother, and one-third to yourself. You promise?"

"I swear on my sacred honor!" said Thad Moore.

"Then good-by and God go with

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you!" said Jack brokenly. "Give my love to mother and sis . . ." He wrung the hand of the ex-mate, tears in his eyes. He did not have the heart to send any message to Letty Hanlon, but he knew Thad would tell of him if he ever reached home, and the girl would understand.

Thad Moore's brain had been scheming—not to outwit Jack Byng or break any promises, but to add a benefit for himself. The youth's suggestion that he take the identity of Billy Dent, in order to make easier the escape from Melbourne, had given the ex-mate a brilliant idea.

He kept on the trail only a quarter of a mile. Then he swung back over the ridge toward the Dent hut where the stiffened body of Warren Crosbie still lay.

When Thad resumed the trail to Melbourne a half hour later there was a globular object swathed in a black coat which had belonged to Warren Crosbie. And that hideous something inside the coat was a token which could not be denied, when Thad Moore applied for the reward offered for the bushranger, dead or alive. . . .

Three thousand pounds, plus his third share of this gold! Thad Moore grinned in satisfaction. He had not done so badly in the goldfields, after all! Quite a joke on the bushranger, after keeping Thad there a slavey and a scullion, working where gold was commoner than scouring soap for his pans.

JACK BYNG had sundered ties with the world—he believed. He would have liked to send more gold to his family, but perhaps he could do so later. For now he was an outlaw.

"I don't reckon Ballarat knows about me yet, though," he considered. "Anyhow, I'm going to dig some of Getch's gold, and cache it away from here. Take a chance nobody comes till I'm through."

Unknown to him, vengeance on the freebooters even then was organized under Inspector Price, and starting the eighty-mile trip from Melbourne. It would be delayed just long enough, for the odd reason that the expedition of police encountered a miner, heavily burdened with gold, who identified himself as Billy Dent.

This miner surprised and shocked the kind-faced fiend of Melbourne by unrolling a package about the size of a bowling ball and exhibiting the head of Warren Crosbie, the bushranger.

There was no doubt of the identification. Price had known Crosbie. So, promising the pseudo-Dent the reward immediately upon his return, Price continued his journey of reprisal against the rest of the freebooters. And secretly he hoped to have a chance at John Thomas Byng, who might have gone to Ballarat.

After burying the dead freebooters, Jack started in to dig in the shaft out there under the *lanai*. The top dirt did not seem very rich; but he had gone down less than a foot before his spade was grating in coarse yellow stuff which even his ignorance knew to be gold. Why, poor Getch had died with the wealth of a Crœsus at his command!

For five straight days, sleeping out in the scrub for fear someone might come seeking vengeance on the freebooters, Jack worked from dawn to dusk. He did not attempt to wash this rich dirt and dust; it did not seem necessary! Instead, he filled the row of biscuit tins with it, and then put more in the bottom of six burlap bags. All these he carried about a mile south

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into the scrub, and buried them on a ridge. He had learned that no mining was done except at the bottom of gulches, so this cache likely would remain undisturbed forever, unless he returned to it.

The containers filled with more gold than Jack Byng ever had dreamed of seeing in his whole life, he filled several small hide pouches to hang at his belt. Then, thoughtfully weighing chances, he took weapons and a small pack of the remaining provisions, and slowly made his way toward the larger grouping of smokes which marked the center of the sprawling town of Ballarat.

There was nothing to do in the center except drink, and that Jack refused for the present. He had espied something which made his heart beat faster. There, tied to a gum tree near one of the barrel houses, was a shabby horse, saddled and standing with drooping head.

Jack looked at the animal, then turned abruptly and entered the saloon tent. He found a bearded miner glowering over a drink. He had lost more than a hundred ounces of gold to the freebooter band, and been wounded. Now he had recovered, and had come in to attempt a trade for provisions. But he had found no buyers for his saddle horse.

Jack overheard the bartender speak to the disappointed man, and turned. "I'll give you this—and this—and this—for your horse and saddle as it stands!" he announced, plunking three heavy hide pouches upon the plank bar. The total came to about seventy ounces, an enormous price for the nag.

The bearded grouch straightened. "Podner," he said hoarsely, "you're ownin' a hoss!" He seized the three pouches, and hefted them greedily.

Jack nodded, and left the saloon. On the threshold he stopped. Two hundred yards away was a cavalcade—three horses and a number of armed soldiers or police on foot. And one stare told the wanted man that he had reason to gasp.

In the lead was Inspector Price of Melbourne, mounted on a jaded, dust-covered horse!

Jack held a handkerchief to his face as if he had dust in his eyes. He walked straight to the waiting animal he had purchased, mounted awkwardly, and then rode at a walk out of Ballarat, bound northwestward. His heart was pounding with excitement. He expected any second to have a shouted alarm sound at his back, but none came. He reached the shelter of the mallee, and urged his horse to a racking trot.

Inspector Price and his police went straight to a barrel house for refreshment. It was not until two hours later, when he began inquiries, that he found out the infuriating fact that he had missed the man he wanted most, Jack Byng, by a matter of seconds, right there in the saloon.

CHAPTER VI.

DRIFTWOOD.

When it is decided to trust a man, he is given additional duties to perform. Even confirmed rogues come up to scratch in most cases.—Meriwether: The Philadelphia Penitentiary (1860).

IT was a noon of late August when the Nancy B. paddled laboriously through Buzzards Bay, and turned her prow in toward Fair Haven and New Bedford. Thad Moore, acting captain, had made a quick trip under difficulties.

His engineer and the members of his

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crew all were miners who had struck it rich in the Australian goldfields. They had been obstreperous, one of them demanding to be put ashore earlier. But Thad had been adamant.

It was late when they anchored; yet Thad himself hurried preparations for his own trip ashore. Even when he moved as fast as he could, paying off, and leaving the vessel shipshape, however, he was preceded by two rather furtive men. These men also had heavy weights of the yellow dust. They had joined just before Thad set sail—weary weeks after the ex-mate had reached Melbourne. It had taken Price a long time to decide to pay the reward for the death of Warren Crosbie.

But now all was over. One of the furtive men, who had been a sick miner despoiled by the freebooters, and whom Jack Byng had found almost dying in the bush, made inquiry and hastened to the squalid cottage where Mrs. Getch bent over her washboard even this late of a summer evening.

"From your husband, ma'am. He struck it rich an' sent this to you!" said the rough looking stranger, lifting a canvas sack in both hands and plunking it on the ironing board. He seemed oddly embarrassed when the woman, raising hallelujahs, fell upon his neck and kissed him hysterically. He got out of there as soon as he could.

Mrs. Getch had not really realized her tremendous good fortune when there came another knock at the door. In came a red-haired Irishman with a cutty pipe upside down in his wide mouth.

"Mrs. Getch?" he asked. "Well, yer man sent ye a prisint—from the goldfields, where he's a-doin' well!" And with that he hauled a long leather poke like a bologna sausage out from under his waistcoat, and dumped it on the ironing board, which trembled under the added weight of treasure.

The good woman was so stunned she could only gasp for words when she saw that this too was gold.

And she was still running around in circles, laughing, wiping eyes on her apron, when Thad Moore came. She knew Thad, at least. He lifted her third share of the gold, telling her that it was from her husband.

The ironing board collapsed under that weight; and Mrs. Getch, moaning that she was asleep and dreaming, fell down in a faint.

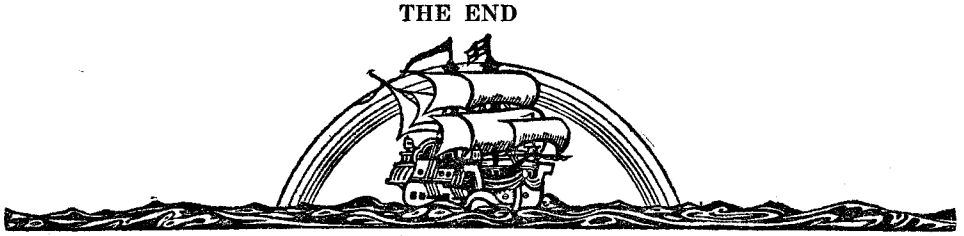
The identical comedy was replayed at the Byng cottage, where a half starved woman and a sad faced girl heard of the death of husband and father at the same time they got these golden presents.

"God bless my boy! He remembered us in his good fortune!" wept the mother.

"He'll be back to you sometime—with a million!" promised Thad Moore, taking his departure.

At that moment on the other side of the world a bronzed, hard-visaged man was cooking breakfast tea and damper, beside a lonely camp-fire in the heart of the mallee.

THE END



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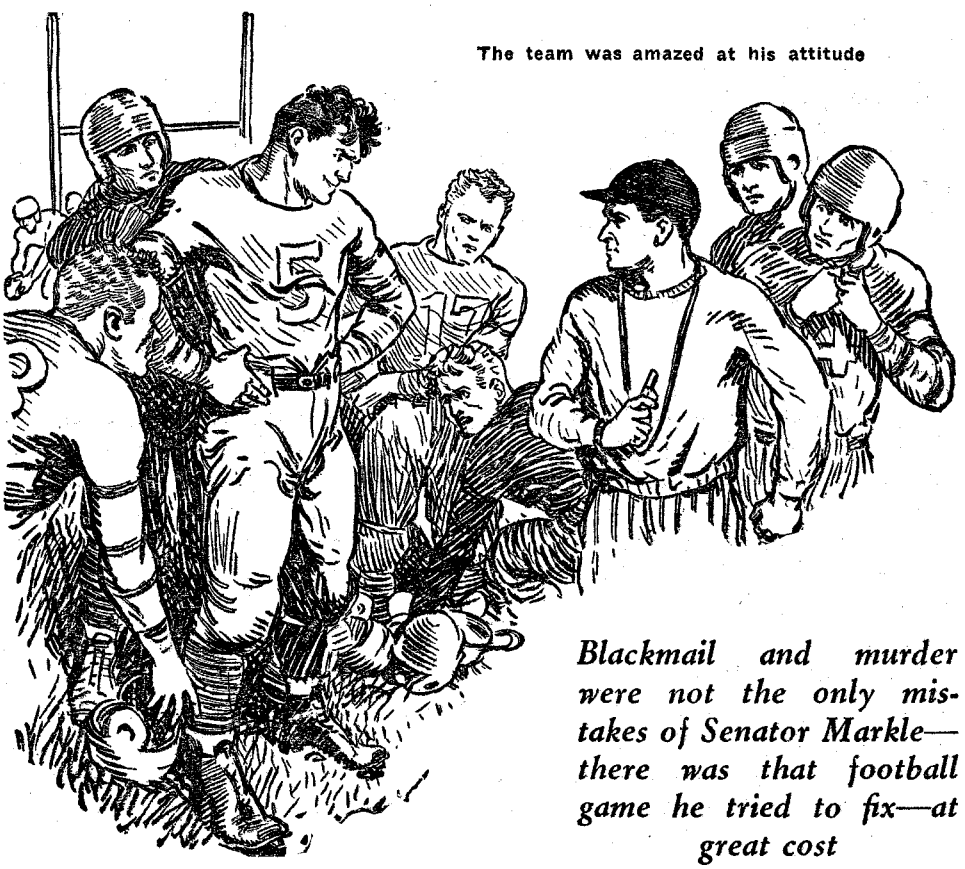

The team was amazed at his attitude

Blackmail and murder were not the only mistakes of Senator Markle—there was that football game he tried to fix—at great cost

Off-Side!

By JUDSON P. PHILIPS

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

BIG Jim Markle rose to be United States Senator through the help of a powerful political machine which he had built up. Tom Carey, his right hand man and slick publicity agent, knows Jim's strengths and weaknesses. He realizes that there is little that Big Jim would not stoop to—if it meant political advancement.

It is while Big Jim and Carey are attending the first game of the football season—when Milburn is playing against State at the Stadium—that Big Jim gets the idea that he could capitalize on the order of fifty thousand fans to bring him votes in the coming election campaign. For Jim needs the votes in what appears to be a tough campaign for reëlection.

Big Jim decides that Steve Thomas, swell-headed player on State's team, will be a big factor in the campaign. He wants to publicize him, pay his way through college, and let the people of the state know that he is behind Thomas.

So after the game, Big Jim invites Thomas to visit him at his hotel room. The young man, who is no dunce himself, sees through Markle's scheme, and holds out for five thousand dollars. Markle agrees. Thomas gets drunk on Markle's liquor, and Caldwell, the captain of the team, sees him, reports him to the coach, and Thomas is dismissed from the squad. All of which spoils Markle's plans. So he decides that he will get control of the team

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by hook or by crook, and reinstate Thomas. Big Jim invites Masters, the coach, to a party in his rooms, and administers knock-out drops. He has compromising photographs taken of the coach—pictures which would cost Masters his job.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE BAG.

I NEVER did know just how Big Jim handled Masters. As a matter of fact the whole damn thing had my nerves so jumpy I didn't want any part of it. It's all very well to pull some kind of a blackmailing stunt with a phoney set-up on a crook who doesn't dare squawk on account of a lot of other things that might be against him. But to frame a guy like this Masters, who as far as I knew was perfectly honest even if he was a trifle sleezy, is dangerous. He might fall for it and he might not. All he'd have to do to land Big Jim in the cooler was to let out a big squawk. And maybe I'd go along with him too as an accessory.

The party . . . which wasn't really a party at all . . . broke up as soon as Masters was laid out. Probably Big Jim had slipped the dames and this Sullivan bird a couple of fish just to come up and make things look gay, because they beat it pronto. As soon as the people were gone, I tried to argue with Big Jim but it didn't do any good.

He was different than I'd ever seen him before. He wouldn't talk. Just sat there, smiling, and smoking, and drinking, and giving me not one iota of satisfaction. I knew that he hated being licked worse than anything in the world, and I figured he was willing to take any kind of risk just to put it over on that kid Caldwell. It was crazy. At least it seemed that way to me.

Masters stayed out cold until about three in the morning. Mills had been watching him, and he came out into the main room and told Big Jim the coach was stirring.

"For God sake watch your step," I said to Big Jim as he got up and started for the bedroom. He just grinned and went out without saying a word.

He was gone about an hour and in that time I emptied what was left of the rye. It was like so much water, the way I felt. I couldn't seem to get tight and my nerves were making me jumpy as a puppet on strings. After an hour Big Jim came out of the bedroom. Masters was with him and his face was the color of diluted pea soup.

He gave me a kind of sickly grin and I knew that somehow Big Jim had put it over. My heart seemed to settle back into its normal position again and I guess I kind of mopped the sweat off my forehead with a handkerchief. Big Jim was smiling that inscrutable smile, and his arm was around Masters' shoulder as though they were great pals.

"Feeling better, coach?" I asked.

"Oh, much," he said, in a shaky voice. "I . . . I can't remember when drinks have affected me that way. Evidently he wasn't quite sure whether I was in the know or not.

"It happens to everybody once in a while," drawled Big Jim. "Stomach a little off or something."

"Yeah," I said.

I got Masters his hat and he leaned against the door for a minute, still smiling that sickly smile. "Mr. Markle tells me you're going to do some special stories on the State team for some of the local papers," he said.

This was news to me, but I kept a dead pan. "I'll arrange to have a pass for you at the stadium tomorrow so

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you'll be able to see the practices and get a line on the boys."

"That'll be fine," I said.

"Well, I guess I'll toddle along," he said. "Good night. Good night, senator. Or should I say good morning?" He laughed as if that was a hell of a joke and went out.

After the door shut, Big Jim started laughing too. "I'm surprised at you, Carey," he said. "You should have more faith in me than you have after two years of working for me. I actually don't think you expected me to put it over!"

"What if he squawks to the first cop he meets on the street?" I asked, sharply.

"My dear fellow, while you were out with young Thomas this afternoon I did a little detective work of my own. This guy Masters is no lily. These pictures were just a short cut. If necessary, there was something else I could have used. Something much more damaging. You needn't worry about Masters. He's in the bag.

I slept until after noon the next day. In fact, Goof Hallor was shaking me and telling me Big Jim wanted me to step on it when I opened my eyes. I shaved and took a shower and wondered if the top of my head was going to drop off or whether the skin and hair would hold it on.

I hadn't felt that rye the night before but it must have crept up on me while I was asleep. I managed to struggle into some clothes and get out into the main room of the suite where Big Jim was waiting for me.

"I've got to get out of here, Carey," he said, brusquely. "Political speech tonight . . . as you know. Hell of a lot to do in the next week or two. But I'm leaving you behind."

I nodded.

"I've been in touch with the *Telegraph*, the *Mail*, the *Sentinel* and the *Leader*. They're expecting some kind of a release from you every day for the sport pages. I want Thomas played up . . . and I don't care how often you manage to slide my name in in connection with his." He grinned. "I am counting on you for this, Carey, and I'm counting on you to keep that kid in line as best you can. Masters is going to be in kind of a spot with the rest of the boys . . . and we don't want Thomas making it any harder for him than is necessary."

MASTERS was in more of a spot than even Big Jim realized. As soon as I'd tossed off my tomato juice and coffee I jumped in a cab and went out to the stadium.

I knew practice was called for three o'clock and I was about fifteen minutes early so I took a stroll around to the locker room.

The pass was waiting for me as the coach had promised and I went in. Some of the boys were dressing . . . Creavy and Red Barnes and McLean and Simon and some of the others. *And* Thomas. I didn't see Caldwell or Masters anywhere. I sauntered over to Thomas and he gave me a wink.

"I guess things are fixed up," he said. "I had a notice from the coach to report for practice."

"Yeah, and don't let it affect the size of your hat," I told him.

He smiled that nasty, twisted little sarcastic smile of his. "Don't forget, I'm an important political figure," he said, sarcastically.

"I'm not forgetting that you're making just about the easiest money anybody ever made," I said. "And I'm not forgetting that you're taking your orders from *me*. And one of 'em is to

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save your wise cracks for somebody with a more perverted sense of humor than I've got."

At that moment young Caldwell came in.

At first he didn't see Thomas and he started to undress, kidding with Eddie Creavy and Cowboy Smith and a couple of others. Then he spotted the sophomore fullback and I saw his lips go tight. He put his coat down very carefully on the bench and came over to where we were.

"What are you doing here, Thomas?" he asked.

Thomas grinned at him. "Coach told me to report," he said.

"And you?" Caldwell turned his cold blue eyes on me.

"Press," I said, and showed him my pass.

He stood there for a second as if he was about to turn a blast on us, but he evidently thought better of it and went back to his locker. He didn't do any more kidding while he started getting on his togs.

Then Masters showed up. He gave me a quick, kind of scared look, but I didn't bat an eye.

"There'll be a blackboard talk before we go out on the field," he said. "I've got some new plays I want to give you and some mistakes from last Saturday I want to point out." And then he did a smart thing. He beat Caldwell to the gun by going straight up to him and saying: "I had a long talk with Thomas this morning, Bob," he said. "After hearing his version of what happened Saturday night it seemed to me that he deserved another chance. I told him to report as usual this afternoon."

For a moment Caldwell said nothing. He just looked at Masters, and I could see the muscles rippling under the coach's jaw as if he was clamping down hard to keep his poise.

Then Caldwell said, very quietly, "You're the doctor, sir."

And that was that.

I didn't hang around for the blackboard talk. Out on the field the scrub team was working out and I found myself a good seat in the stands and sat there letting the sun beat down on me and wondering where in hell Big Jim had got that rye. I felt awful.

Pretty soon the varsity squad came out and began to limber up. Caldwell and Speed Martin and Brannon, a second string back, went to work practising punts. Joey Williams, the second string quarter, threw passes to the ends. Boy, that Eddie Creavy was a wizard! If he just got his fingers on the ball, it seemed to stick.

Cowboy Smith wasn't quite so spectacular at snaring passes as either Creavy or Red Barnes, but he certainly was a honey of a defensive end. I never saw anybody who could ride out interference better than he could. And what a tackler! He reminded me of Red Matal, the old Columbia end, the way he could go smashing into a play.

AFTER about twenty minutes of limbering up, Masters called the varsity and the scrubs down near the south goal line for a scrimmage. I heard him say something about trying out the new plays he'd just given 'em, and they went to work.

Pretty soon I began to realize what was up. Every single one of these new plays was a power play, calling for Thomas to carry the ball somewhere between tackle and tackle.

Some of them were just straight power plays. Some of them were cleverly masked. Some of them were delayed cross-bucks. But *all* of 'em

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had Thomas in the ball carrying rôle. They were all designed for use in the pressure zone; that is, inside the ten yard marker.

Of course you couldn't tell if they were as good as they looked because the varsity just ran roughshod over the scrubs, but even with that kind of opposition you got a notion of just how tough a runner this Thomas was.

I couldn't help thinking that whether Caldwell liked him or not he'd have to admit this big sophomore was going to be quite a lot of use. And I couldn't help realizing, too, that Big Jim had had his way with Masters. These plays were going to make it possible for Thomas to score quite a lot of touchdowns—which was grist to our mill right then.

When I got back to the hotel I was surprised to find Goof Hallor there asleep in a chair. He'd gone on with Big Jim. I woke him up.

"The chief wants a copy of the stuff you do for the papers," he said.

"Well, you'll have to park yourself somewhere while I write it," I told him. I dug out my typewriter, lit a cigarette, and went to work. Goof just went back to sleep again. How I envied him sometimes. He spent three-quarters of his life unconscious, and right then I wished I could change places with him. But I couldn't. I had to turn out this junk!

THOMAS STARS IN STATE PRACTICE

State's new backfield luminary, Steve Thomas, monopolized the attention of coach Masters at this afternon's workout at the stadium. After his display of powerful running against Milburn on Saturday, State's mentor realized he had a new scoring ace, and spent the week end designing a series of plays which'll put the battering-ram fullback in a position to become one of the scoring leaders of the conference.

Thomas, who comes from Lakeside, the same town which produced Big Jim Markle, popular senator, is a bruising, hard running back who will greatly enhance State's championship chances this year. A protégé of the senator's, Thomas reminds this observer of Ted Coy, legendary Yale hero, in the fierceness and abandon of his running. He . . .

I began to feel sicker than ever after reading this hooey. When you stop to think what lay behind it all.

"Goof!" I hollered, and the senator's bodyguard sat up, rubbing his eyes. "Beat it in the bathroom and fix me up some bicarbonate of soda," I said. "I feel terrible."

"Sure, Tom, sure," he said, and went off.

Ten minutes later I went in the bathroom to see if he'd accidentally cut his throat or something. He was sitting on the edge of the bathtub sleeping again. I fixed the soda for myself.

And when I got back to the other room there was a guy there; a guy I had never seen before in my life. He was middle height, fat as a barrel, with a round smiling face like a moon. Forty to fifty years old, maybe. He smiled at me, and there was something wrong with it I couldn't spot until I concentrated on his eyes. They were like gimlets boring into you.

I was so surprised to see him that I didn't say anything for a minute. He was standing by my typewriter, reading the copy I'd been turning out.

"Say, what the hell!" I said.

The rolls of fat under his chin creased up as his smile broadened. But still the eyes didn't laugh. "Ah, Mr. Carey, this is indeed a pleasure," he said. He had a soft voice, an oily voice, a voice that gave me a little cold feeling down my spine.

"How did you get in here?" I demanded.

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"One look at me should give you the answer, my friend," he said, a chuckle in his voice. "You could hardly expect one of my gargantuan proportions to come through a window, or materialize out of space. To be brief, I came through the door."

"To be brief," I said, sarcastically, "you'd better do some quick explaining or I'll call the house dick." I gave him a sharp look to see if maybe he was soused. But I couldn't see any sign of it."

"That would be a waste of time, my dear Carey. A futile and unproductive gesture on your part. You see, I am a detective myself. People who know me well call me Joe. People who don't know me well call me Mr. Scalzi."

"OKAY, Mr. Scalzi," I said. "Start explaining. Detective or no detective you have no business in here without a warrant. What's the gag?"

"It's my insatiable curiosity," said Scalzi. "Like the elephant child—or don't you read Kipling? The fact is, Carey, I'm just crazy to know what this sudden interest of yours is in sport. How come this brilliant account of State's practice? Why the party for coach masters here yesterday. A party at which only the coach stayed more than an hour? How come your interest in young Thomas? It all fascinates me, Carey. Particularly since I've been paid to find out."

"Who are you working for?" I snapped.

"That, my friend, is a professional secret which I am not at liberty to divulge. But it would save us all a lot of time if you'd do some talking. You see, I've thought about it in my tub. I've thought about it over my breakfast. I've thought about it as I roam the streets of this fair city. I thought about it when I tailed you out to the stadium this afternoon. What is Big Jim Markle's interest in the State football team, in Steve Thomas, and in Coach Masters? I am a normally intelligent man, Carey, but I don't get it. Your esteemed employer never does anything for fun. What's the game?"

"Listen, Joe," I said. "I—"

"Mr. Scalzi to you," he interrupted.

"All right, *Mister* Scalzi. Get this. I'm not falling for this line of yours at all. What's peculiar about Big Jim's interest in sport? He's a football fan like anyone else. This kid Thomas comes from his home town. Jim is interested in him and helping him through school. It's all perfectly normal and quite usual."

"Nuts," said Mr. Scalzi, coolly. "And again, nuts!" He took a battered silver cigarette case from his pocket. It was an old fashioned one, big enough and heavy enough to be a small suitcase. He took out a cigarette and lit it and almost at once there was a sickish sweet smell in the room. Perfumed! His eyes squinted a little to keep out the smoke. Then he took the cigarette from between his thick lips and spoke very slowly.

"Just a friendly tip," he said. "I'm going to find out what this game is. If there's anything crooked in it. Well, it's going to be just too bad. Pass the word along to your chief. Tell him I'm working for a party who wants to be sure he's a good boy. And if he isn't a good boy we're going to turn on the heat. We're interested in sport, too, Carey. Boy, how interested we are in sport!"

And with that Mr. Scalzi turned and walked out of the room. Big as he was he walked with the soft tread of a cat,

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and when he shut the door he didn't make a sound.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO SCRIMMAGE.

THIS Scalzi had me worried. I tried to figure out whom he might be working for, and could only guess it must be one of Big Jim's political rivals. I wasn't kidding myself about how smart he was. Just that little talk was enough to convince me he wasn't any amateur, and there was already plenty about our set up I wouldn't have cared to have anyone know.

I got in touch with Big Jim late that night and told him all about it. I could tell by the sound of his voice he didn't like it, and he was puzzled, too.

"He's not any local dick . . . official or private," he told me. "I know 'em all. Well, there's nothing for you to worry about, Carey. You just keep writing your publicity and if anyone asks you questions, all you know is I'm helping Thomas through college."

"I wasn't born yesterday," I said.

Just the same this Scalzi was in my hair. The next morning when I went down to the lobby he was there, smoking one of those scented cigarettes. He gave me a genial wave of the hand and just went on sitting there. Later, when I went out to see the practice, I found him standing at the stadium gate.

"You going to stay all afternoon?" he asked me, grinning.

"What's it to you, *Mister* Scalzi?" I said.

"Because if I was sure you were going to spend the afternoon I'd attend to some other affairs of mine," he said, grinning.

"I'll just leave you guessing."

When I came out of practice about three hours later he was there, leaning against a telephone pole and grinning. I was hopping! I grabbed a taxi and started off. Out of the back window I saw a car pull up and Scalzi got in. It was one of those "hire-by-the-day" private-looking cars. I leaned forward and spoke to my driver.

"There's a guy tailing me," I said. "Five bucks if you shake him."

"It's too easy," my driver said.

Well, he did everything except drive down into the sewers! We back tracked and doubled around that town till I was dizzy. For a while Scalzi's car hung on and then I didn't see it any more.

"I guess we shook him," I said. "You can take me to the hotel."

When I walked in the lobby there was Scalzi, smoking and grinning at me.

"Have fun?" he asked.

I told him what he could do—in detail!

After that I just let him follow me. He went everywhere I did . . . ate where I ate. I found out he had a room at the hotel. Once I tried slipping out in the middle of the night and going to a drinking place I knew. Scalzi wasn't around when I left the hotel, but he turned up at the drinking place about ten minutes after me.

Then I knew he had somebody else working with him . . . somebody I hadn't spotted yet. I began to have the willies. Not that I was doing anything I cared whether anyone saw. But just the notion that this Scalzi or one of his men was taking in every move I made was a goat getter! Every once in a while he'd wander up to me.

"Want to tell me what it's all about?" he'd say.

"Go to hell, Joe," I'd say.

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"Mr. Scalzi to you," he'd say, and saunter off. It got to be an act.

Meanwhile, everything was going great as far as our little racket was concerned. If Caldwell was sore at us or at Thomas he didn't show it on the football field. They were to play Walbridge that Saturday and they figured to be easy pickings. Big Jim turned up for the game and I nearly fell over when I found out he'd made arrangements for us to sit on the bench along with the State squad.

STATE started the regular varsity team and right off the bat it was clear they had too much for Walbridge. Caldwell directed things in his usual heady fashion but there wasn't much need for anything but to give the ball to someone. Walbridge took the kick off, was held for three plays, and then they kicked over the middle of the field. From there State marched. Caldwell, Speed Martin, and Thomas carried the ball and they ripped right down the field playing straight football.

Martin finally scored, standing up, from the ten yard line. A couple of minutes later they were under way again.

I had to laugh the way little Jean Laroque was bowling over a big bohunk who played opposite him in the Walbridge line.

Laroque must have been outweighed seventy pounds, but he had this big lug dizzy, diving at him low, hitting him from one side or the other, feinting him out position on one play, and smashing him out on the next. Dynamite, that's what that kid Laroque was . . . and he was opening up holes in the line big enough to let a Mack truck through, let alone slippery, hard running backs like Caldwell and Thomas and Speed Martin.

Big Jim was sitting a couple of slots up the bench from me, next to Masters, the coach. From time to time I could see his head bobbing earnestly as he talked. Masters looked bothered, as though Big Jim was breaking his concentration on the game, but he'd always answer. Poor sucker! He was clear out on the end of the limb.

Well, State was running off play after play and had worked her way clear down to Walbridge's twenty yard line again for a first down. I saw Big Jim pounding his fist into the palm of his other hand and knew he was being pretty urgent about something. All of a sudden Masters got up from the bench.

"Williams!" he snapped.

Joey Williams, the second string quarterback, sprang up off the bench, throwing off the blanket he'd been wrapped in and grabbing his headguard.

"Get warmed up!" said Masters.

The kid started running up and down the sidelines, bringing his knees up high. Presently Masters clapped a hand on his shoulder. They were right in front of me and I could hear what the coach said.

"Nothing but power plays, kid. We've got a chance here to use the plays we worked out in practice the other day. Give the ball to Thomas and keep giving it to him when we're in a scoring position. We've got a chance to make him look good today and it'll have some of our future opponents doing a little worrying. Give 'em Thomas till he comes out of their ears. Now get out there . . . for Caldwell! Hurry."

Williams went tearing out across the field to report to the umpire. While this had been going on Caldwell had wangled another first down on the eight yard line. He came trotting off the

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field now with a kind of puzzled look on his face. Usually, with a team in a scoring position like that they don't change field generals unless there is some crucial situation that makes it imperative for the coach to send out orders. There was nothing like this now. I guess Masters saw the look on Caldwell's face because he spoke up quickly.

"Nice going, Bob. No use wearing yourself out against these palookas. Run in and get yourself a bath and a rub down. I won't use you again till the second half."

"I'd like to watch the game for a bit, sir, if you don't mind," said Caldwell. And he sat down on the bench right next to me, wrapping a blanket around his shoulders.

Well, on the very first play Williams called Thomas ripped through a hole opened up by little Laroque and smashed the whole eight yards for a score. Big Jim gave me a quick, smiling look and then turned away again. I knew then and there that he'd been the one who had engineered this.

THERE was nothing phoney about the rest of that half, from the spectators' standpoint. Walbridge was obviously weak, and Masters pulled out a lot of his regulars. Barnes went in at end for Cowboy Smith. Styles and Craig took over the guard jobs from little Laroque and Holloway, a gawky kid named Gibbons took over for Babe McLean at right tackle, and Hooper and Brannon went in for Burnett and Speed Martin in the backfield.

And still State went on steam rollering the Walbridge outfit. But it was all Thomas now. He was given the ball on three out of four plays and he took it places. Williams or Brannon carried the ball just often enough to mix things up a little. But it was really Thomas who lugged the ball on three long marches down the field and over the goal line for three more scores.

When the two teams broke for the locker rooms at half time everybody in the stands was talking about Thomas. He looked like the best back who'd come along in ten years, they said. Nobody said anything about Walbridge being weak or that the State line was opening up holes that a four-year-old kid could have carried the ball through.

Big Jim and I walked around amongst the crowd during the intermission and listened to the talk, and big Jim was grinning from ear to ear. People recognized him occasionally. One guy piped up in a loud voice:

"Hi, Senator. That kid of yours can certainly carry the mail!"

Big Jim's fingers gave my arm a little squeeze. "You've done a good job, Carey. They're starting to tie him up with me already." And it was true. I heard fragments of a dozen conversations that showed the stuff I'd been writing had taken root. "Senator Markle's putting him through school!" ". . . a break for State that Big Jim's interested in football!" ". . . they say he couldn't have stayed in school unless Big Jim had helped out his family!"

Votes! That's what a lot of this meant. Votes that might have gone another way.

The second half was just a continuation of the slaughter. I couldn't help noticing the difference in the team, though, when Caldwell was running it. You felt a sort of keen tension . . . an element of surprise . . . a sort of artistry, if you don't mind a little high flown language.

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They went to a quick score right off the bat with Speed Martin carrying the ball over from clear out at the twenty-five yard line on a delayed reverse that made a sucker out of the whole right side of the Walbridge line.

It was a beautifully executed and thought out play, led up to by three other plays that looked just the same only weren't. Right after that Caldwell was yanked again and Joey Williams took over.

The whole character of the play changed then. It was like the difference between an expert swordsman and a primitive cave man smashing his way with a club.

In the end, Thomas had scored three more touchdowns, the final score was 60—0, and Thomas had personally accounted for forty-two of those points and was way out in front of the conference scoring parade.

It was a perfect day for Big Jim and his little racket. And the evening papers were black with Thomas's name in the headlines. And they didn't forget to mention Big Jim in the body of the story!

That night I ran into Rafe Jones, the *Globe* man, in a chop house where I went for dinner. He waved me into a chair opposite him and I sat down with pleasure. I always like spending a little time with Rafe. Just as I sat down I saw my fat detective friend, Mr. Scalzi, check his hat and coat and take a corner table. I jerked a thumb toward him.

"Say, Rafe, do you know who that bozo is?" I asked. Rafe knows everybody.

Rafe looked at him for a minute. "Never saw him before in my life," he said. "Why?"

"He says his name is Scalzi and that he's a private dick," I said. "He's been tailing me for a week now. I can't shake him and I've given up trying."

"What have you been up to . . . besides turning out those lousy sport stories for the local sheets?" Rafe asked.

"That's my only crime . . . so help me!" I grinned.

RAFE gave me a funny look. "Maybe it's more of a crime than you think," he said. He cut off a piece of steak and chewed on it thoughtfully. "Masters isn't as smart as he used to be," he said.

"How so?"

"Letting State run up that lopsided score on Walbridge. He should have put in the water boy if he had to keep the score down."

"Why?"

"Why? Elementary, my dear Watson. Nobody is going to be bothered by that shellacking but State. You've got a hell of a tough game next Saturday with Huntingdon. They and Colton have the best chance of any teams left on State's schedule to knock 'em off. They aren't going to be impressed by that score. And the State boys are liable to think they're pretty darn good after this game.

Particularly your little boy friend Thomas. About the time he gets his wisdom teeth shaken loose on a couple of tackles by Jack Bryson, Huntingdon's All-American center, he may not be such a hell of a back. Your friend Thomas probably thinks he's a world beater tonight. That's not a good frame of mind for a green kid who is up against first class opposition."

"This kid Thomas is really good," I told Rafe.

"Maybe," he said. "Maybe. But a smart coach wouldn't have let him know it. I'd a hell of a sight rather

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have sent him into the Huntingdon game anxious to *prove* how good he is, instead of convinced of it before he starts." Rafe cut off another piece of steak and ate it, and his eyes were on me. "Of course, it might not be Masters' fault. Maybe a little influence was brought to bear to make Thomas look good today."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't give me that baby-faced stare," Rafe laughed. "You know damn well what I'm talking about. I hope for your sake, Carey, it's on the level. But let me show you where you-all didn't use your heads . . . if you were trying to build Thomas up. Thomas is a big shot now. Only the wise guys stop to figure what that opposition was this afternoon.

"Now suppose Huntingdon stops him dead next week! They're likely to, Carey. In the first place after all the play he got this afternoon, they'll be laying for him. In the second place they're no T-Model team. Nobody is going to run wild through them.

"But the crowd's going to expect it of Thomas after today. And when he doesn't . . . well that little balloon may be thoroughly pricked. It wasn't smart . . . it wasn't good theatre, my boy. Maybe one touchdown this afternoon and then under the blanket. That's the way I'd have handled Mr. Thomas . . . if I'd been building up a ballyhoo for him."

I thought a lot about what Rafe said and the more I thought about it the more I thought he was right. But I knew better than to pass it on to Big Jim . . . especially since it was too late to do anything about it. But it was true, the crowd would expect a lot more of Thomas than he could deliver against Huntingdon.

I was surprised at the betting odds around town. In spite of that terrific shellacking of Walbridge as opposed to the fact that Huntingdon had only beaten them twenty to nothing the Saturday before the odds were even as early as Tuesday. State men started offering about 4—1, but their dough was gobbled up so fast that the odds quickly dropped. State men were chuckling to themselves and thinking what suckers the Huntingdon backers were. But just the same every cent was covered . . . and covered quick.

There was one factor that weighed a little against State and that was that the game was to be played at Huntingdon. But that doesn't really make much difference to a really good club. Of course it meant the crowd would be all Huntingdon . . . but the crowd doesn't run with the ball or do the tackling. We kept playing up Thomas in the papers, but there was a lot of publicity coming in from the opposition too.

Red Jack Bryson, Huntington's great center, got a big play. They called him the Manchester Terror, on account of the fact that he came from some hick town in Vermont. It had been a gag at first, but in the end he turned out to be a wow. Last year and this, no one had gained over three yards through the Huntingdon line which Red Jack backed up as a roving center. When he tackled a back he stayed tackled.

Then there was Dick Somers, a triple threat back who could do everything with a football except make it sit up and say "uncle." And Bill Shiver, a pretty fair fullback and a classy kicker.

They said he could lay a hat on the sidelines fifty yards away and drop the ball right on it. No one ever ran back his punts because he always angled 'em out of bounds. They sounded good on Monday, better on Tuesday, and on

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Wednesday I began to wonder if maybe the odds ought to be on them!

I BEGAN to wonder more after State's practice on Wednesday. Masters had put the boys through very easy routine stuff both Monday and Tuesday. He didn't want to arrive at a fighting edge too soon. They just ran through signals and did a little kicking and passing. But Wednesday they had a long blackboard drill. Masters outlined a flock of Huntingdon's plays that the scouts had brought in and he showed how they should be stopped.

This fellow Somers was a master at the cut back. He would seem to be following his interference and suddenly dive in through a hole that nobody had bothered to plug up. Masters told 'em they must be prepared to stop this all the time, because it was a play on which Somers used his own judgment. If the hole was there he cut back through it. If it wasn't he followed his interferers.

Masters told 'em that there must never be that hole or Somers would be doing a cake walk toward the goal line. Then he took them out onto the field to scrimmage against the scrubs who'd been schooled in Huntingdon's formations. And that's when the trouble started. This mug Thomas went up to Masters.

"I guess I won't do any scrimmaging, coach," he said, smiling that twisted little smile of his. He was looking at the coach with a meaning look. All the other boys were standing around and there was a sudden very dead, very unpleasant silence.

"What do you mean?" Masters said, sharply. "Is there something wrong with you?"

"Oh no," said Thomas airily, "but I don't see any reason to wear myself out in this kind of business. I need all my energy for Saturday. You want to win, don't you? Suppose I was to twist an ankle or something?"

Caldwell took a quick step toward Thomas, and then stopped abruptly. It must have been the look on Master's white, working face. "You mean," the coach said, slowly, "that you think you don't need the work?"

"What the hell, we got it all on the blackboard, didn't we?" Thomas said, in a nasty voice. "I don't see any reason for getting banged up out here this afternoon. I've still got a lot of bruises from Saturday."

There was just one thing any football coach in the world could do then, and that was tell this stuck up species of smelly cheese to turn in his suit and not bother about football for the rest of the year. But Masters didn't do that. His teeth clicked sharply together and he said: "Take a couple of laps around the track, and then get a shower and a rubdown when you get in. Practice tomorrow at three."

Thomas grinned at him insolently. "Okay coach," he said, and jogged off.

"All right boys," Masters said crisply. "Now we'll get on with the scrimmage."

Nobody moved. I saw the boys kind of looking at each other as though waiting for someone to give 'em a cue. Caldwell's cold eyes were on the coach's face. And then Cowboy Smith spoke up in that drawling Texas voice of his:

"Somehow I don't cotton to scrimmagin' myself," he said, pulling off his headgear. "I'll just take a couple of laps around the track and call it a day."

"Smith!" Master's voice cracked sharply.

But Smith just grinned and jogged off, and slowly but surely every other

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member of that varsity squad except Caldwell followed him. It was mutiny, plain and simple. Caldwell just stood there for a minute looking at Masters, and then very quietly he said: "I'm sorry, sir," and trotted off after the others.

Masters just stood there as if he was rooted to the spot, not a drop of color in his face, his fists clenched so tightly the knuckles stood out polished and white. And then I heard him say almost savagely between his teeth: "Damn his soul! Damn his black soul!"

Just then I think I felt sorrier for this guy than I ever did for anyone in my life. There was stark tragedy in that ragged voice of his. I couldn't help wondering what it was Big Jim had over him.

It must have been something pretty tough for Masters to have put up with a thing like this.

Those pictures, bad as they were, would never have prevented his squawking in a spot like this. He stood there, alone as hell, in the middle of that football field.

I couldn't resist moving up and dropping a hand on his shoulder. "Tough break, old man," I said.

He spun around at the touch of my hand as though a rattlesnake had struck him. There was a look of such murderous hatred in his eyes that I stepped back. "Get out of here, you dirty louse!" he snarled.

CHAPTER IX.

BIG JIM'S GIFT.

THE outside world never heard about that practice. I told Big Jim about it and he was sore as hell . . . but not at Thomas! That was the joke of it. He seemed to think the kid had a right to take the stand he did. That shows how much Big Jim really knew about sport, or college teams. He was sore at Caldwell and the others.

"A bunch of stuck-up young pups!" he called them. "That Caldwell . . . just because his old man is a big shot banker, thinks he's something!"

"He's just about the best football player State's got," I said.

"Boy, I'd like to take a fall out of him," said Big Jim, grimly.

But there was no time to think about taking falls out of anyone. Thursday night there was to be a big mass meeting in the gymnasium . . . a rally to give the team a send off. Big Jim told me we were to attend and have seats on the speaker's stand. Somehow he'd wangled it so he was to make a speech.

As nearly as I could find out not a single player on the squad had spilled the beans about that mutinous session. The next day things went on as usual. Masters didn't call a scrimmage, though. I guess he couldn't face another riot. He had a kind of a hang-dog look about him, and I got the notion that the kids were going about their work the way they were, not on his account, but because they felt something for the school and for their captain.

Nobody was disrespectful to Masters, but all the same you got the notion that they weren't thinking much about him. He *did* give 'em another long blackboard talk on Huntingdon's plays. Poor devil, he was doing his level best to prepare them for the game.

The rally that night was something. There were probably close to a thousand kids packed in the gym, with the football squad, the coaches, Doctor MacClintock, the president, Big Jim and me and some of the Athletic board

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on the platform. The college cheer leaders were down front and they led the mob in a couple of roof raising cheers. Then a young guy who I found out was head of the student board got up to act as a sort of toastmaster.

"The first speaker we're to hear from tonight is our coach," he says. "I take pleasure in introducing Mr. Masters."

They gave Masters a great cheer and he got up and moved forward, white as a sheet. His voice shook a little as he spoke, hesitantly, nervously.

"Students of State College," he said, slowly. "On Saturday we face perhaps the toughest game on our schedule. I know many of you have high hopes for a conference championship this year. No one has higher hopes than I have. When your team trots out on the field at Huntingdon you will be represented by as fine a bunch of boys as has ever worn the purple and gold of State. They play good football, clean football, hard football." Cheers from the students. "Huntingdon has a good team too," Masters went on. "They have high hopes, too. When we meet them its going to be an even, hard fought game, that may be decided on the breaks. It's an alert team that forces the breaks for itself, and I believe we have such a team. I believe we have a fine chance to win. I . . . I guess that's all." And he sat down. There were more cheers.

"All coaches are apt to be cautious," said the toast master, laughing. "Coach Masters knows darn well we're going to win. And there's another fellow here who knows it too. Fellow students, I give you our captain . . . Bobby Caldwell!"

I thought the roof would fall in, they hollered so long for him. He sauntered up to the front of the platform, as easy and poised as an actor. He spoke in a clear, steady voice.

"Coach Masters is right," he said. "Huntingdon is a tough bunch. But we're out to give 'em hell." Thunderous applause. "Wait," he said. "There are a lot of you, most of you in fact, who can't afford to make the trip to Huntingdon. We'll miss you. Will miss your vocal support. But I want to tell you that seeing you all here tonight, knowing how hard you're pulling for us, is going to mean a lot to us out there on Saturday. Thanks."

AND he sat down. The next speaker was supposed to be the college president, but I saw Big Jim in earnest conversation with him. And then it was Big Jim who came forward, with that easy, friendly smile on his face.

"Students of State," he said, "I don't really belong at this rally of yours. "I'm not an alumnus of State . . . I'm not a college man at all. But I've sort of adopted State as my college . . . because if I'd had the money as a kid this is where I'd have come." They gave him a pretty good cheer on that.

"When your captain spoke to you just now," he said, "I realized for the first time that many of you were not going to be able to see this great game on Saturday. You should all be there. The team needs you."

"What'll we use for money?" somebody yelled from the back of the house. That got a laugh.

"I'm coming to that," said Big Jim. "Your president has explained the situation to me. The round trip railroad fare plus the price of a ticket to the game is too much for most of you. Well, I want to see State win, and I know the value of your support to the

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team. So you're going to be there . . . every mother's son and daughter of you!"

There was a sort of confused murmur of excitement in the crowd. Big Jim went on.

"Every one of you who presents a bursar's receipt at the railroad depot on Friday night will be given, absolutely free, a round trip ticket to Huntingdon. And for every one of you that goes there will be a free ticket to the game at the Huntingdon stadium box office. The team wants you there . . . I want you there. So you're going to be there!"

Boy, did they give it to him then. I've never heard such hysterical cheering in my whole life. They went crazy. Kids jumped up on the platform and hoisted him up on their shoulders. There were no more speeches . . . no more anything but a wild snake dance out of the gym and around the campus. I sat there on the platform in open-mouthed amazement.

I knew Big Jim had had no such idea when he went to the meeting. This was going to cost him plenty of dough, but, boy, what a gesture. This was an example of how that big mug never let any chance slip. Those kids would be for him! Their families would be for him!

The whole damned alumni body of State would be for him. And if State won and Thomas did his stuff! Well, it was in the bag.

Of course the papers played it up big the next day. Everybody all over the State knew that Big Jim was financing an expedition of the entire student body. I suppose only a few wise guys realized that there was anything behind this gesture but a big heart. Rafe Jones was one of 'em. My fat shadow, Scalzi, was another. Rafe and I rode to Huntingdon on the special train with the team. I was surprised when I bumped into Scalzi in the smoking compartment.

"You here?" I said.

"Sure, sweetheart, you know I can't bear to have you out of my sight."

"Listen, mug," I said. "I . . ."

"Mr. Scalzi to you," he said, grinning. But those gimlet eyes weren't laughing.

"Oh nuts," I said, and went back to join Rafe.

Rafe had just finished reading a stack of newspapers and we sat in silence for a moment watching the telegraph poles whizz past.

"I'm getting interested in this play of Big Jim's in spite of myself," he said, after a while. "It's damn smart politics, Carey. But there's something in it somewhere that stinks a little. Take Masers. He's acting queerly. I don't mean just personally, but the way the team was run in that Walbridge game. Taking Caldwell out and throwing the play all to Thomas. It looked to me as if some—er—shall I say influence?—had been brought to bear. It wasn't smart football, and whatever else may be said about Masters, he knows the game. You wouldn't know the answer to that, would you, Carey?" And he gave me a sharp look.

"I don't know what you're driving at," I said.

Rafe sighed. "I didn't think you would," he said, drily.

It's an all night run on the train from State to Huntingdon . . . that is to say, we left State about midnight and pulled into Huntingdon about six in the morning. There were buses waiting at the station to take us to a country club where the team was to stay all day Friday. Most of the boys tore off some more sleep Friday morning and after

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lunch had a light work out . . . mostly signal drilll.

RAFE and I lounged around the town pickin' up dope on the game and laying a bet here and there . . . and having a drink practically everywhere. At least I did. The more I heard about this Huntingdon team the more I began to wonder if this wasn't going to be a Waterloo for State and for Big Jim. In any cigar store or café you'd could hear 'm comparing teams. Somers was head and shoulders above Caldwell, they said. And this fellow Shiver was such a wizard of a kicker he could keep a team back in their own territory a whole afternoon. And when Red Jack Bryson met this sophomore phenom, Thomas, coming head on, State would be using a sub fullback for the rest of the afternoon. The only thing they handed us was our ends, Eddie Creavy and Cowboy Smith. Even the Huntingdon people admitted they were good.

But everybody was confident, too damn confident to make me feel good. I couldn't help wondering what would happen if the going was really tough, with the State kids not really for Masters. I knew there was no quit in those kids, but you've got to have harmony when you're in a tight spot.

And then later on that night came the final blow-off.

I wandered back to the country club where the State boys were quartered along about eleven that night. Huntingdon turns off all its lights and pulls in the sidewalks about ten-thirty, and there wasn't anything to do in the place. There was a big locker room on the main floor and a flock of showers, and I decided I'd have a good hot bath before I turned in.

I went up to my room, got on my bathrobe and slippers, grabbed a towel, and went down stairs again. And when I opened the locker room door and went in, I heard voices. When I rounded a row of lockers I saw who it was and my hair started rising up on the back of my neck. It was Caldwell and Thomas.

Caldwell had on a pair of slacks and polo shirt and a pair of slippers. Thomas was dressed to the nines in a blue serge suit, a flashy tie, a soft brimmed gray felt hat. The first thing I heard was Thomas saying: "Listen, Caldwell, why don't you go off and tend to your knitting. I know what I'm doing . . .

Caldwell's voice was cold as ice. "I want you to get this straight," he said, slowly. "Everybody was ordered to be in his room at nine o'clock. It was my job to check. Every mother's son was where he should be, except you. And you were out somewhere, having yourself a time on the night before a very important game."

"I suppose you told the coach," Thomas sneered.

"I haven't told anyone," said Caldwell, quietly. "I waited here for you myself. I don't know what's going on around here, Thomas. You broke training rules once, and coach Masters saw fit to overlook it. You were guilty of the rankest kind of insubordination and insolence at practice and it was passed by. If any other member of the team had been guilty of either one of those offences he'd have been off the squad for the season. I don't pretend to know why the coach lets you get away with it. I don't care much. But I'm here to tell you now that I won't stand for it, and the rest of the boys on the squad won't stand for it."

I had slipped behind a locker where they couldn't see me.

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"What do you propose to do about it?" Thomas sneered.

"It's very simple," said Caldwell. "You don't play tomorrow or any other time. You're through."

"Oh yeah?"

"That's all there is to say about it," said Caldwell, grimly.

THEN Thomas flared up. "What the hell do you care what I do, as long as I score touchdowns for your lousy club? What are all those kids coming up here tomorrow going to think when you don't put your star back on the field? What is Senator Markle, whose footing a big bill so they can come, going to think?"

"You mean what is Senator Markle going to think of you," said Caldwell, quietly. "I understand he's putting you through school . . . helping your family. You've hardly repaid him by this kind of conduct."

"Listen," Thomas snarled. "You think you're a big shot, Caldwell. If Big Jim Markle wants me in that game tomorrow I'll be in there. Don't kid yourself about that for a minute. Masters will see to that! As for you, you've had it in for me, you self-righteous little——"

What he called Caldwell isn't printable. And what Caldwell did was so quick I missed seeing it. I just heard a crash against one of the lockers, and I popped out and saw Thomas sprawled on the floor with his lips bleeding. Caldwell was standing over him, very white, very intense.

"I suppose we might as well have this out now as any other time," he said, quietly.

And then Thomas came up off the floor like a wild bull. I've seen some fights in my time . . . bar room brawls where anything is legal. But for a minute this was one of the fiercest fights I ever saw. Thomas went absolutely berserk.

He picked up a stool and let fly with it at Caldwell's head. The State captain was cool as ice. He ducked and then stepped in and let Thomas have a stiff one-two to the jaw that jolted him back on his heels. But Thomas came in, head down, arms flailing.

The sheer fury of his charge hurled Caldwell back against a locker, and one of those wild swings left a bright red cut over Caldwell's left eye.

But all the while he was sinking his fists in Thomas' mid-section, he managed finally to drive him back a foot or two and then let him have an upper cut with his right that would have done Joe Louis credit. Thomas tottered like a falling building, but he came in again, blindly, swinging his big fists.

If one of those haymakers had landed it would have been just too bad, but the right slid over Caldwell's shoulder and smashed cruelly against a metal locker, and the left was parried. This kid Caldwell fought with the same coolness, the same shrewdness that he used in directing his team on the field.

Thomas drew back, panting for breath, and I could see he'd hurt his hand against the locker. But it didn't stop him from making one more charge at his man. But Caldwell met this one with everything he had . . . right, left, and right again to Thomas's jaw.

I don't believe any man in the world could have stood up against it. Thomas's knees buckled under him like they were rubber and he fell, toppled over a bench, and lit full length on the concrete floor. Caldwell stood looking at him for a minute and then he turned and walked out of the locker room.

I went over, filled a glass with cold

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water, and threw it in Thomas's face. He pulled himself up on his hands and knees, shaking his head. His nice blue suit and tie were all spattered with blood. When I saw he was all right, I left him too. To hell with the thick-headed lout, I thought.

On the way to my room . . . I'd forgotten about the bath I went for . . . I heard the last part of the row. The transom was open over the door of Coach Masters' room, and a light shone through it. I heard kind of loud voices and I don't mind admitting I listened . . . because it was Caldwell talking to the coach.

"Look here, sir," the kid was saying, "I've played football under you for three years. I've always admired you as a coach. I don't think there's anyone knows more about the game than you do. Your attitude toward the fellows has always been fair and square. But I can't understand your attitude toward Thomas."

There was a moment's silence and then Masters spoke in a low, tense voice. "Frankly, Bob, you seem to have it in for him. He's a high strung temperamental kid. He needs handling. You can't handle everybody with an iron rod."

"The rest of us live under a certain code of discipline, sir," Caldwell said. "If we break it, we take our punishment. If he breaks it, it is condoned. Tonight he's been out until just a few minutes ago. I gave him hell about it and it ended in a fight. Now, either we play this game right or we don't, sir. The rest of us do . . . Thomas doesn't. We won't stand for it. Thomas doesn't play in that game tomorrow, sir, and that's flat!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to leave that to me," said Masters, sharply.

"I'd like to ask you a question, sir," said Caldwell, in a very tense voice. "Are you coaching this team, or is Big Jim Markle coaching it?"

"Caldwell, I . . ." Masters flared.

"Oh, we might as well have it out, sir. I know it was Markle who persuaded you to give him another chance after that drinking episode. I know from some of the boys on the bench that it was at Markle's insistence that you used Thomas almost exclusively in the Walbridge game. And just now Thomas said that if Big Jim Markle wanted him in the game he'd be in it. *You'd* see to it, he said. And so I ask you again, sir, are you coaching this team or is Markle?"

"I consider that an impertinence, Caldwell!"

"I'm sorry about that, sir. But Thomas doesn't play, and that's flat!"

"And if I put him in there . . .?" Masters asked, slowly.

"The rest of us simply won't go on."

"I am afraid, Caldwell," said the coach, slowly, "that as long as I *am* coach I will have to run this team as I see fit. The college authorities have not declared Thomas ineligible, and as long as he is eligible, if he is the best man for the job, I shall use him . . . regardless of your personal likes or dislikes. As to matters of discipline, they are entirely up to me too."

"Then it's war between us, sir?"

"As long as you adopt this attitude I'm afraid it is, Bob."

"Goodnight, sir," said Caldwell.

CHAPTER X.

FIELD CAPTAIN'S PRIVILEGE.

IT was a perfect day for football. Cool, clear, crisp.

The special train from State with the whole damn student body aboard

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arrived about eleven in the morning. They paraded down the streets of Huntingdon with Big Jim leading the show. It was better than a circus. I would have had a real laugh if I hadn't been worried stiff.

There was going to be trouble about Thomas . . . I knew that. If it came to a head it might not be bad for us. If Thomas talked and people knew he'd been paid five Gs to help along our publicity that would be bad.

And Scalzi and Rafe Jones both smelled a rat of some kind. And Scalzi was working for someone else, who must also smell it. If by any chance the dope about Masters came out we were sunk! Damn that Thomas kid! If he'd acted like any other normal youngster we'd have been all right!

I never had a decent chance to talk to Big Jim before the game. He spoke at a Rotary Club luncheon. He was mobbed by undergraduates all day who were making him King of the May on account of what he'd done for them all.

Everybody was talking football, eating it, thinking it, and drinking it! The Huntingdon stadium was going to be jammed to the gates. By one o'clock people were swarming in.

There was color everywhere. The purple and gold of State; the orange and black of Huntingdon . . . feathers, banners, flowers. Women turn out in their brightest and gayest for football games and I saw enough beautiful janes to last a life time. Everybody was arguing about the teams. Caldwell, Somers, Shiver, Bryson, Smith, Creavy . . . you could hear those names on everybody's lips. Drunks and sober people, young and old, everybody bright eyed and eager and bustling their way into seats. The big Oval looked to be packed full a half an hour before game time.

And then a roar went up across the field . . . I was sitting on the State bench. The Huntingdon bunch came thundering out on the field. They wear their colors reversed from Princeton . . . that is, the orange is the background of their jerseys with black stripes around the sleeves. State's jerseys were purple with gold stripes. Boy, those orange and black boys looked good. I had a score card and started spotting some of them.

Somers I saw, big and fast and with a sort of dash even in this informal practice. Then I saw this Shiver practicing punts. High, high and far they spiraled. He'd have a guy standing down on the sidelines about sixty yards away and he'd hardly have to move two steps to catch the ball.

I heard somebody say he was a Mills-coached kicker. Then I saw Red Jack Bryson, the Manchester terror. He was an ox! But not a clumsy big man . . . agile as a wildcat and weighing in at about 210. Somehow they all looked awful big and awful good to me!

And then our bunch came out. It was madhouse behind us. There was no doubt it made a difference having that whole State bunch there to cheer. But I wasn't paying much attention to them. I was looking over the boys and I didn't like what I saw.

Then I began getting that tense feeling in the pit of my stomach. Caldwell had gone out to the center of the field to confer with the officials and Bryson, the Huntingdon captain. The coin flashed as it was tossed up into the sun and Bryson must have won because I saw him indicate that he would defend the east goal.

Then he trotted off the field. But Caldwell stayed out there, talking very earnestly to the officials. Presently he came back to the sidelines. Our bunch

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was pulling on their head guards as Caldwell and Masters stood close enough for me to hear what passed between them.

"You insist on playing Thomas, sir?" I heard Caldwell ask.

"He's the best man for the job," Masters said, tight-lipped.

"Very good, sir," said Caldwell.

I saw Thomas standing with the others, and he slipped me a wink. The big baboon!

Then it was on. State was to receive at the west end of the field, Caldwell and Speed Martin on the goal line, the rest ranged up in front of them. The referee's whistle . . . the captains raised their arms to signify they were ready. Red Jack Bryson started forward to boot the ball. The crowd was yelling themselves hoarsse. And I felt suddenly frozen where I sat as the toe met the leather and it went sailing in the sunlight toward State's goal line . . . straight at Caldwell.

He waited, caught it . . . and then fumbled. A moan from the state side. But he was on the ball like a cat, scooped it up and came racing up the sideline.

Red Jack Bryson nailed him like a thousand of brick on about the twenty yard line. That fumble had cost ten yards, and Caldwell got up shaking his head as though that first tackle had made him a bit groggy.

AFTER the kick off I can relax a little. The referee lugged the ball out from the side lines. State was in its huddle. Out they came, weaving in that muddle system . . . single wing back to the right with Caldwell in the back spot. Over left tackle the play went . . . or rather started. Red Jack Bryson, roving behind the line, was in like a flash to smear the play. A one yard gain. Martin back this time . . . a reverse . . . and once more Bryson diagnosed the play correctly and smeared it at the line of scrimmage.

"That guy is no false alarm," I said to Big Jim, who was sitting next me.

He grinned. "Wait till Thomas hits him," he said.

But Caldwell was calling for a kick, the right play in that spot. He booted a honey well past the middle of the field where little Bill Clark, the Huntingdon quarterback was waiting. Eddie Creavy and the Cowboy were down on him like a couple of stampeding steers and the minute he had the ball he went down, and went down hard.

"Now we'll get a look at the great Somers," said Big Jim. He was smoking a big cigar and looking placidly confident. This had been quite a day for him. It wasn't like his first game. Everybody knew him now, and made a fuss over him.

Well, we got a look at Somers all right. He started out around left end on the first play, with Miles, the number three back, Shiver, and Clark and an end ahead of him. The old Cowboy did his stuff, forcing that interference wide toward the side lines.

Right then I saw what Masters had been talking about in that blackboard drill, because Babe McLean, our tackle, started driving at the interference too, and like a flash Somers cut back through the hole the Babe had left. He ran with a kind of fury I never saw before . . . you could almost see the smoke come off his cleats!

He smacked into Pete Simon, our center, pounced off him and went charging on until Ed Burnett hit him. And Ed needed help because he only slowed him up, but Creavy had slipped over and nailed him to the ground.

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Eleven yards and a first down. Oh, we'd seen Mr. Somers all right. I gave big Jim a look. His teeth were clamped a little tighter on the cigar, but he didn't look worried.

On the next play Somers took it again, around the right side this time. There was no hole for a cut-back this time but that army of interferers carried him about seven more yards before Butch Reardon pulled him down from behind. Then Shiver came plowing through the center for a first down on State's own forty-two and Caldwell called a time out. That first attack had been so fierce I guess he figured the kids needed time for a breathing spell.

"That Somers is pretty good," I said to big Jim.

"Fair," he said. "Very fair. We haven't got started yet."

Well, we got started right away . . . backwards again! On about six plays Somers and Shiver carried the ball right down to our twelve yard line for a first down. The State bunch seemed to be demoralized. The crowd behind us was yelling hysterically for them to hold.

You can't take a bunch of damned good football players and run 'em ragged forever. And right then the State outfit got hold of itself. Somers tried a quick cut-back over tackle and for once it didn't work because little watch-charm Laroque slipped through and tossed him on his ear with an ankle high tackle. It was the first time Somers hadn't made a substantial gain through our line, and it seemed to hearten the State bunch. They didn't give an inch on the next drive at tackle. And then, just when it seemed they were going to hold little Bill Clark, the Huntingdon quarter, slipped all the way through to our two yard line and a first down. I shut my eyes then.

AND of course the minute I shut 'em something happened. Somers smashed at tackle, the ball bounced out of his hands high into the air and Butch Reardon grabbed it and started legging like a scared rabbit down the field. I thought Big Jim was going to have apoplexy. He hit me a clout on the shoulder that nearly crippled me for life, and he was yelling at the top of his lungs, his face bright scarlet. Everybody was yelling his lungs out.

Butch Reardon is a tackle and no Red Grange, but he had about a fifteen yard start before little Clark and Somers set out in pursuit. This Clark is one of the fastest runners I ever saw and he just put his head down and tore! Reardon looked like he was standing still and we all saw he wasn't going to make it. He just got over the midfield stripe when Clark nailed him. But we were out of the woods.

On the very first play Bob Caldwell caught Huntingdon flat-footed with a sharp pass angled out to the right to Eddie Creavy, and Creavy streaked for it. Once more little Clark saved the day for Huntingdon with a fine tackle, but it was *our* first down on their seven yard line. I never saw the aspect of a game change quicker . . . but that's football.

"Now watch that son-of-a-gun of a Thomas tear 'em wide open," Big Jim shouted in a hoarse voice.

But Thomas didn't. He didn't get a chance. Caldwell carried the ball on the first play and picked up a couple of yards off right tackle. Speed Martin picked up three more on a reverse. Third down and only two to go for a score. Here was the spot for the battering-ram of State to go into action. State came out of the huddle.

"Signals!" someone shouted. It was

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Thomas. They went back into the huddle and came out again. Boy, it was Caldwell back! He tore hard into the line, but couldn't make it. Still two to go. Out of the huddle they came, doggedly, slowly. *Ed Burnett back!*

Big Jim was on his feet yelling. "The damn fool! What's the matter with him! What's he holding out on Thomas for! Get him out of there! He's throwing the ball game!"

Into the line charged Burnett. There was a pile up. A tense wait, while the referee unpiled 'em. And then his signal . . . first down for Huntingdon! They'd held.

A hum like a thousand buzzing bees went up behind us in the State stands. What was wrong? Why hadn't Caldwell used Thomas, the man who had ripped his way in berserk fashion through Walbridge for seven *touchdowns!* Masters was on his feet too, chalk white, fists clenched tight. Big Jim slammed him across the shoulders.

"Get that Caldwell out of there!" he snarled. "He's trying to make suckers out of all of us!"

"Williams!" Masters' voice cracked sharply. "Get ready to go in."

Huntingdon was lined up with Shiver back to kick out of danger. He got off one that justified his reputation. It sailed down to State's forty-five and out of bounds without anyone having a chance to put a finger on it. Then Masters gave Joey Williams the nod and he went tearing out to report to the umpire. He reported to the official and then I saw Caldwell making a gesture . . . indicating that he refused the substitution. There was a delay, while Williams stood around looking confused. Caldwell, Cowboy Smith, and Little Laroque were talking with the referee and the umpire. And presently, to the amazement of the crowd Williams came trotting back to the sidelines. He came up to Masters.

"Bob refused the substitution, sir," he said, quietly.

"What the hell is he talking about?" Big Jim bellowed.

"It's the field captain's right to refuse a substitute," snapped Masters out of the corner of his mouth. He looked down the bench. "Barnes! In for Cowboy Smith!"

Meanwhile State had run off a couple of plays, one a pretty five yard off-tackle slant by Caldwell. The other a no gain line buck by Burnett. Barnes raced out and reported to the umpire, and this time there was no hitch. Smith came jogging off the field and the minute he got to the side lines Masters grabbed him.

"What the hell's going on out there?" he demanded.

Cowboy Smith smiled and wiped the dirt and sweat off his face. "We're not playing Thomas," he said, quietly, "and Bob's staying out there to see that we don't. He's got a right to refuse a substitute, and he's goin' to stay in the game to see that things are run our way."

"The hell he is!" Big Jim shouted. "Get him out of there, Masters!"

Masters shrugged. He suddenly looked old and tired. "Nothing I can do," he said. "Caldwell's captain. He's in charge on the field. I can't do a thing about it."

Big Jim was the color of a brick chimney. Then he grabbed me by the arm. "Come on, Carey!" he said, grimly.

"Where the hell are you going?" I asked him, bewildered.

"I'm going to get that kid out of there," said Big Jim Markle.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK

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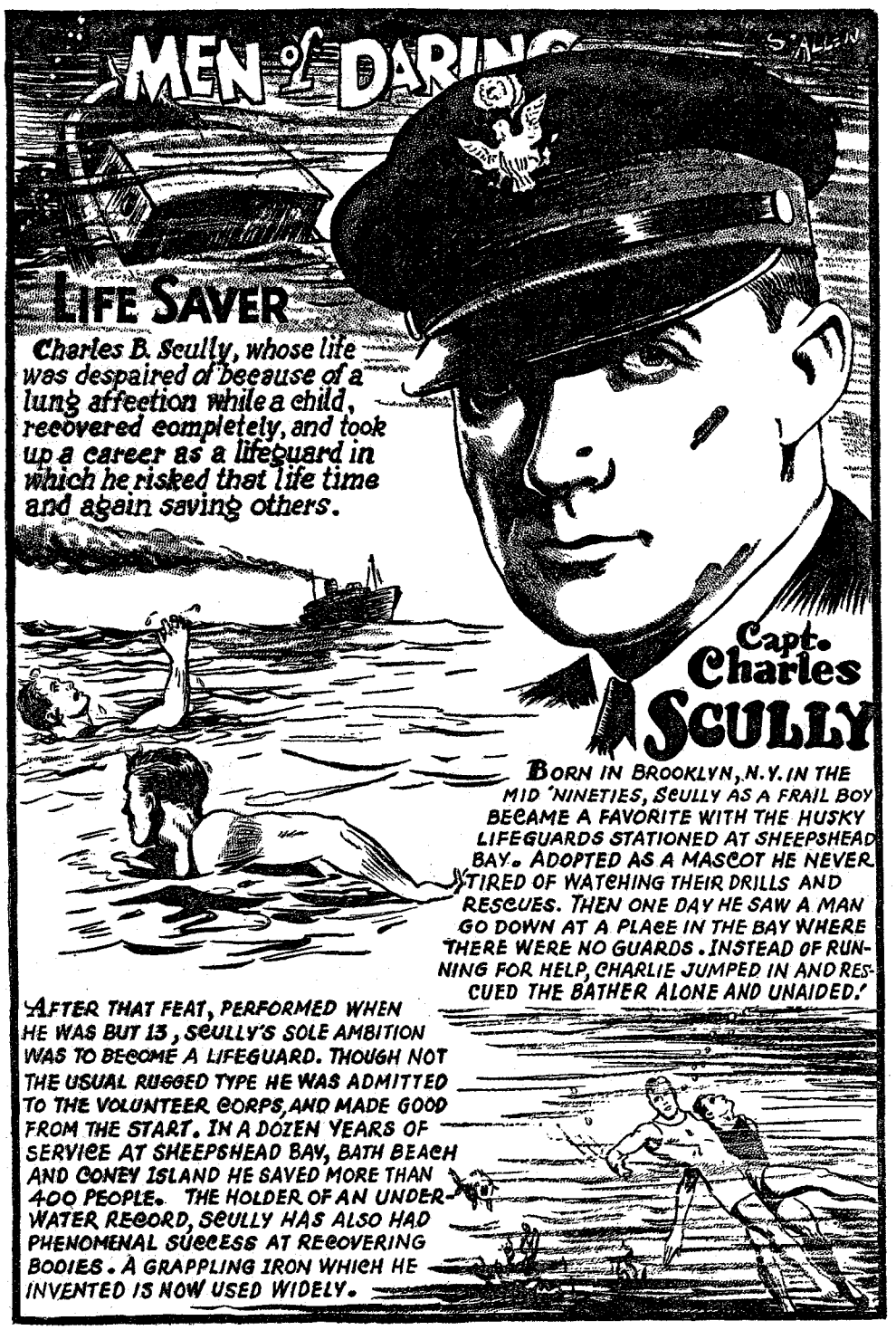
MEN of DARING
LIFE SAVER
Charles B. Scully, whose life was despaired of because of a lung affection while a child, recovered completely, and took up a career as a lifeguard in which he risked that life time and again saving others.
Capt. Charles SCULLY
BORN IN BROOKLYN, N.Y. IN THE MID 'NINETIES, SCULLY AS A FRAIL BOY BECAME A FAVORITE WITH THE HUSKY LIFEGUARDS STATIONED AT SHEEPSHEAD BAY. ADOPTED AS A MASCOT HE NEVER TIRED OF WATCHING THEIR DRILLS AND RESCUES. THEN ONE DAY HE SAW A MAN GO DOWN AT A PLACE IN THE BAY WHERE THERE WERE NO GUARDS. INSTEAD OF RUNNING FOR HELP, CHARLIE JUMPED IN AND RESCUED THE BATHER ALONE AND UNAIDED!
AFTER THAT FEAT, PERFORMED WHEN HE WAS BUT 13, SCULLY'S SOLE AMBITION WAS TO BECOME A LIFEGUARD. THOUGH NOT THE USUAL RUGGED TYPE HE WAS ADMITTED TO THE VOLUNTEER CORPS, AND MADE GOOD FROM THE START. IN A DOZEN YEARS OF SERVICE AT SHEEPSHEAD BAY, BATH BEACH AND CONEY ISLAND HE SAVED MORE THAN 400 PEOPLE. THE HOLDER OF AN UNDERWATER RECORD, SCULLY HAS ALSO HAD PHENOMENAL SUCCESS AT RECOVERING BODIES. A GRAPPLING IRON WHICH HE INVENTED IS NOW USED WIDELY.

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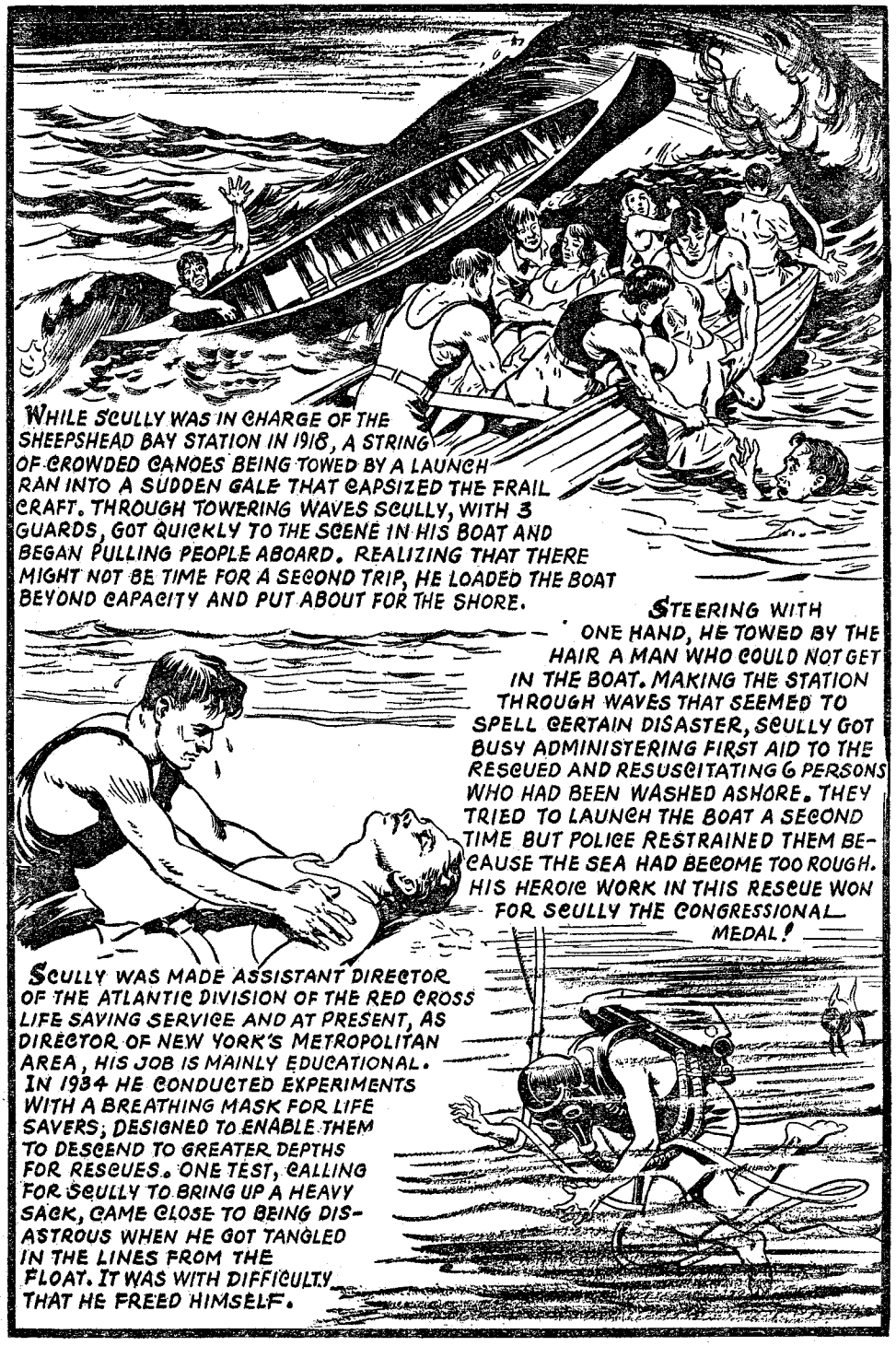
WHILE SCULLY WAS IN CHARGE OF THE SHEEPSHEAD BAY STATION IN 1918, A STRING OF CROWDED CANOES BEING TOWED BY A LAUNCH RAN INTO A SUDDEN GALE THAT CAPSIZED THE FRAIL CRAFT. THROUGH TOWERING WAVES SCULLY, WITH 3 GUARDS, GOT QUICKLY TO THE SCENE IN HIS BOAT AND BEGAN PULLING PEOPLE ABOARD. REALIZING THAT THERE MIGHT NOT BE TIME FOR A SECOND TRIP, HE LOADED THE BOAT BEYOND CAPACITY AND PUT ABOUT FOR THE SHORE.
STEERING WITH ONE HAND, HE TOWED BY THE HAIR A MAN WHO COULD NOT GET IN THE BOAT. MAKING THE STATION THROUGH WAVES THAT SEEMED TO SPELL CERTAIN DISASTER, SCULLY GOT BUSY ADMINISTERING FIRST AID TO THE RESCUED AND RESUSCITATING 6 PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN WASHED ASHORE. THEY TRIED TO LAUNCH THE BOAT A SECOND TIME BUT POLICE RESTRAINED THEM BECAUSE THE SEA HAD BECOME TOO ROUGH. HIS HEROIC WORK IN THIS RESCUE WON FOR SCULLY THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL!
SCULLY WAS MADE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE ATLANTIC DIVISION OF THE RED CROSS LIFE SAVING SERVICE AND AT PRESENT, AS DIRECTOR OF NEW YORK'S METROPOLITAN AREA, HIS JOB IS MAINLY EDUCATIONAL. IN 1934 HE CONDUCTED EXPERIMENTS WITH A BREATHING MASK FOR LIFE SAVERS; DESIGNED TO ENABLE THEM TO DESCEND TO GREATER DEPTHS FOR RESCUES. ONE TEST, CALLING FOR SCULLY TO BRING UP A HEAVY SACK, CAME CLOSE TO BEING DISASTROUS WHEN HE GOT TANGLED IN THE LINES FROM THE FLOAT. IT WAS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT HE FREED HIMSELF.

Next Week: Slatin Pasha, Soldier and Slave of the Dervishes

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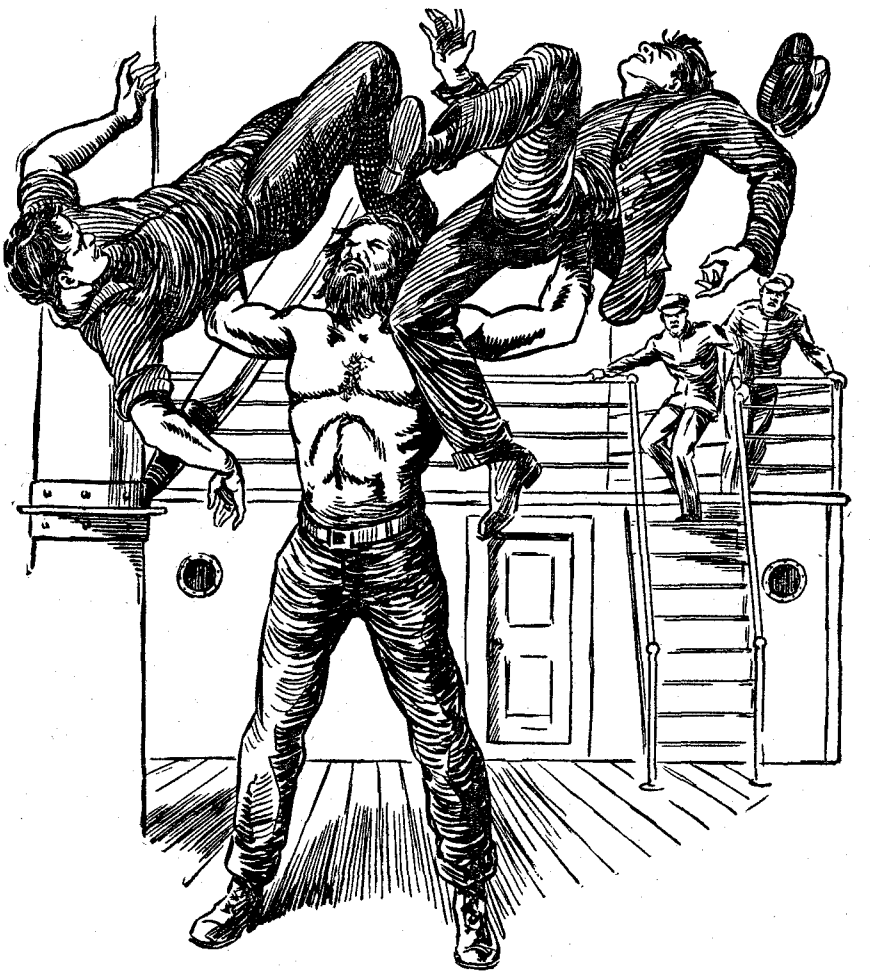
Goliath

By R. V. GERY



Goliath lifted them like two dumb-bells

"SPEAKIN' of the big boys—" Mr. Charteris of the Levuka leaned back in his chair and contemplated the scene below us with a thoughtful eye. We were sitting, he and I, on the terraced slopes above the harbor at Cattaro, looking down almost on top of the Levuka, in process of loading below. An immense stevedore—a truly mastodonic fellow

Something frightful was aboard that storm-racked vessel—something that made the ship as easy a mark for piracy as sailed the seven seas

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with a gigantic black beard—was bossing affairs, stripped to the waist, his skin gleaming like old ivory. I had commented upon his exuberance, and Charteris had responded by what has come to be his invariable prelude to a yarn.

"Speakin' of the big boys—"

He rammed the dottle down in his pipe and drained his glass meditatively. I refilled it without ostentation, and the Levuka's second officer, who is also one of the world's most genial and masterly liars, composed himself for a special effort.

"Did I ever tell you," he inquired with an air of detachment, "about the time I'd dealin's with a gent out of 'Oly Writ?"

Mr. Charteris has favored me with some terrific tales in the past, and I have normally ceased to display surprise or incredulity at anything he may choose to impart. But this opening of his was something of a new one, and I suppose I must have blinked.

"Wot's that?" he demanded with mock severity. "Doncher believe me? Nice kind of a doubtin' Judas you are, ain't yer? Feller can't even—"

"Go on, go on!" I besought hastily. "I'll believe anything—you ought to know that by now!"

He chose to disregard any thinly veiled innuendo there may have been in this, chuckled, and began.

Yes (he said), straight out of 'Oly Writ he was—or that's what we was led to understand. An' you can say what you like, mister, but there was times when we'd all of us got notions there was somethin' in it, at that. If you'd have been in them partic'lar surroundin's, well, maybe you'd have been a bit more careful with them high an' mighty sneers o' yours. I dunno, though—there's some coves wouldn't believe nothin' not if they saw it themselves an' the Lord Mayor o' London swore to it on a stack o' Bibles as high as St. Paul's.

Well, anyway, it was on the old Algerian, a bit after the war. I was second on her then, and a dirty old witch she was, in the general cargo line out of London River. Sloggett was her master's name, a fat joker with a swelled head on him an' not much use for anyone but Thomas Sloggett in person. And he'd a first officer of the name of Llewellyn—a Welshman.

Now as for Welshmen, I dunno if you're familiar with the general run of 'em—but in case you ain't lemme tell you this: there ain't nothin' to be said against 'em as such, but when it comes to seein' things what isn't there, an' bein' set in their judgments, well, an army mule in the horrors ain't nothin' but sensible to them.

Like this here Llewellyn, whose first name was David, which I'll ask you to remember. He was a skinny little josser about as big as two potatoes, with a wild kind of dreamy eye, an' a trick of talkin' to himself now an' then in Welsh—an' a temper you could have sharpened a saw on. Rum kind of a stick to be first officer, but he knew his job all right, I'll say that much. Only he was an uncomfortable sort o' cove to work with, as you might imagine.

WELL, we was down in the Eastern Mediterranean this trip, on the usual cargo-snuppin' lay—dollop here an' a dollop there an' chance it, if you know what I mean. We'd been up the Black Sea to Odessa, and down again to Smyrna an' so forth, amblin' along slow an' genteel-like towards Alexandria and the Canal. An' down off the Palestine coast one

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of the hands comes down with some kind of a fever he'd picked up among the Bolshies, an' pretty bad he was, too.

Sloggett wasn't any of your Sister Ann skippers when it come to coddlin' a crew, but after a bit he began to get the wind up over this bird. An' one afternoon he comes up on the bridge after a visit to the fo'c's'le.

"Alter course, Mr. Llewellyn," he says. "We'll have this pore lad in the 'ospital right away. They'll look after him there."

Jaffa, where the oranges come from, was plain in sight over there on the port beam, and in a couple of hours we was wallowin' off it, signalin' like billy-o for doctors an' nurses and all the rest of the outfit.

Captain Sloggett was a hustler no end when he hadn't got to pay anything for it—and anyhow he was in one perishin' funk—the feller'd die on board—an' he'd be held responsible.

So he had him carted ashore double-quick, and then he called a boat away for himself.

"I'm goin' to try and pick up another hand here," he says to Llewellyn. "Don't know what we'll find—but anything's better than nothing, I s'pose."

With that, off he goes, very pompous, and Llewellyn leans on the rail, starin' over his head at the shore half a mile away. He was in one of his odd moods, I knew—somethin' simmerin' in that cracked noddle of his—and it didn't surprise me to hear him gabblin' away to himself in Welsh. By an' by he turns round to me.

"D'ye see it, Mr. Charteris?" he says in a queer cracked voice. "D'ye see it?"

He was all white an' twittery and fidgetin' to beat fifty, but I let on not to notice.

"See what, sir?" I says.

He waves at the shore. "Yonder it is, Mr. Charteris," he says. "Aye, there it is—the land o' the Philistines! The Cities of the Plain, Mr. Charteris—Sodom an' Gomorrah! Gog an' Magog, an' all their wickednesses! Yes, indeed, Mr. Charteris, it's them—an' that my eyes should have been spared to look upon them!"

He was workin' himself up into a kind o' frenzy, and I don't mind tellin' you it put me in a hooh-hah, as you might say, to listen to him.

"Why don't you slip ashore an' have a squint at 'em, sir?" I says, more for the sake o' talkin' than anything. "The skipper won't be back for a while—"

YOU ought to have seen the look he give me. "Me!" says he. "Me to go ashore there—in that sink o' wickedness and abominations? Dear, dear—an' what d'ye think I am, Mr. Charteris? I'd not set foot in the accursed place, whatever!"

Well, there wasn't anything to say to that, o' course. If he liked to go on that way, it wasn't for me to say him nay, in a manner of speakin'.

"Yes, sir!" I says, very respectful. "I daresay you're right, at that!"

I don't think he heard me, for he was at the rail again, gabblin' away something amazin'. I let him alone, you c'n lay to it. No monkeyin' with first officers in the jim-jams for me—an' by an' by he goes below, still mouthin' to himself an' shudderin' all over.

MacTavish, that was our engineer, winks at me across the bridge. He'd come up for a sniff of air and he'd been takin' it all in.

"Mphm!" he says, acidly, for he and Llewellyn was about as friendly as a couple o' tomcats on an alley wall.

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"An' whut's ailin' wi' wee Dauvit? He doesna seem ower weel—"

"Dunno," I says. "He don't like the Philistines, by the look of it."

Mac rubs his old red nose and grins. "Ay?" he says. "Weel, weel, there's no accountin' for tastes in this verra impairfect worrld. He doesna like the Pheelistines and I dinna like him, an' sae we're a pair. But what's he against the Pheelistines?"

"Search me," says I. "Who are they, anyway?"

Mac looks at me pitying. "Losh!" he says. "An' you wi' a ticket! The Pheelistines, ma mannie— Preserve us, whut's yon?"

He was gapin' all of a sudden over my shoulder towards the shore, and I spun round to see what the excitement was. There was a lighter comin' out, with the skipper's boat not so far behind it; he'd got his business settled quick, by the look of it.

But it wasn't at the skipper that Mac was starin'. It was at the lighter an' what was standin' up in the bows of it. You never saw nothin' like it in your life.

You talk of big men—an' this Yugo-whatever-the-hell-he-is below here's a pretty fair size—but beside this perisher he'd be a sniveling babe. So help me Sam, he was goin' on eight foot, for we measured him later; eight foot, an' built similar all through. It was wicked.

"Sterr-ewth!" I says. "What kind of a holy show's this?"

Mac doesn't answer for a minute; he's too busy takin' it in. Then he laughs.

"Weel," says he, "if it wasna that we're aboard a condemned old she-jackass of a steam tramp, and in the twentieth century, I'd say 'twas the sons of Anak back on earth again. But as it is—Guid sakes, wull ye look at him!"

THE lighter was comin' alongside now, and Mac and I leaned outboard to get a better squint at this new affair. Seen close, he was bigger than ever, if you'll believe me—a fair mountain of a great gorilla of a feller, with a big black beard like this joker below here, and a snub-nosed mug the size of a dinner-plate. He was standin' straddle-wise, arms akimbo, grinnin' up at the ship.

The bos'n's at the gangway, and he's as flummoxed as Mac and me.

"Well, strike me pink!" he says. "'Ere, you—off out o' that! We don't want no bloomin' elephints around 'ere!"

The man grins at him again, and somehow it ain't a very comfortable grin. Them whackin' great yeller teeth showin' through his beard—well, it made me think of fee-fo-fum an' grindin' o' bones right away. He picks up his bundle and sets foot on the ladder.

"Hey!" says the bos'n. "You leggo o' that, d'ye hear, Jocko! Wodjer think this is—a ruddy circus? Oh—beg pardon, sir! Didn't see you—"

That was to Sloggett, who's come up in his boat. He's full of bounce as per usual, and there's a knowin' look in his old eye.

"What's all this, Hudson?" he says, pretty short. "Let him aboard at once and fix him up in Lorimer's bunk in the fo'c's'le. He's our new hand."

Well, anything like the bos'n's phiz I'll trouble you to imagine. He was a tough nut, Hudson was—but this here monstrosity was somethin' outside his calculations; miles an' miles outside it.

"V-very good, sir!" he stammers. "What's his name, sir?"

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The skipper beams kind of benevolent while the man climbs aboard, and I dunno, but I think the Algerian listed a couple o' foot as he done it.

"His name," he says, "is Ali Baba Ben Hooligan, or something of the sort. He's one of their local fishermen, but he's been a deckhand before, from what I can make out. He ought to pull his weight, anyhow," he says, "an' by the way, they tell me he's quite a little scrapper with his fists. If you want a name for him, seein' where he comes from, how about Goliath, eh?"

The bos'n touches his cap. "Very good, sir!" he says. "Come on 'ere, you Goliath—get a move on there—"

He stops, sudden, for there's a kind of a scream behind him. Llewellyn's come runnin' on deck, havin' heard the last words, by the look of it. He's got a face on him like wet ashes, and he points with a shaky finger.

"Goliath!" he yells. "Goliath he is—six cubits and a span is his height, look you, and his spear like a weaver's beam. Set him ashore, captain—set him ashore before he destroys us!"

Well, that wasn't no way for a certificated first officer to be goin' on, and Sloggett looks him up and down.

"What's all this, Mr. Llewellyn?" he asks, puffin'.

THE mate's still in his tantrums, and he goes up close to Goliath, where he's standin' with his arms crossed in that doormat of a beard of his—devil's own handsome swine he was, too, in his gorilla kind of a fashion. Llewellyn looks like a cock-sparrow beside him, but he's fierce enough.

"You!" he says in a creaky voice. "Listen to me, you! There iss to be none of your ancient devilments aboard. I am first officer here, and I know you, by damn!"

Well, Goliath keeps on grinnin', very pleasant, an' yet not so pleasant, if you get me, but he don't say nothin'; and the skipper takes Llewellyn by the arm.

"You'd better come with me," he says, soothin'. "A good lie down won't do you no harm, Mr. Llewellyn. You ain't well—it's this sun, there's no doubt. Come on, now, and don't let's have any more nonsense!"

Well, Llewellyn goes, and the bos'n takes Goliath forward, although I don't believe he fancied the job much. MacTavish, who is still on the bridge with me, shakes his Scotch head.

"Aweel!" he says. "I dinna exoctly ken whut's in oor respected commander's mind, but there's somethin'—an' whatever it is, an' unless I'm sair off in ma judgments, we'll see proceedin's before all's done! Mphm, ay!" says he, and dodders off, still shakin' his old nob an' chucklin' to himself.

Well, that was that, as you might say. Goliath went to the fo'c's'le—they'd to knock a couple of berths into one for him after they'd tried foldin' him in like a jack-knife—an' Mr. Llewellyn continued on duty, but he was kind o' subdued an' thoughtful, as if he'd somethin' worryin' at him internal-like.

The skipper'd give him a pretty good dressin'-down, by all the signs, that afternoon in his cabin, an' Llewellyn may have been a bit cracked, but he wasn't crossin' Sloggett any. All the same, he wasn't happy, and it didn't take much to see what was in his gizzard.

At Port Said it was hot, and at Suez it was hotter, and by the time we'd been a day or so wobblin' along in the Red Sea the Algerian was a first-class dress-rehearsal for hell. Everybody's tempers begun to sit up an' take notice, and there was snappin' back an'

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forth across the saloon table, and I've no doubt everywhere else as well. MacTavish and Llewellyn started in on their alley-cat squabblin's again, and Sloggett didn't improve matters none by gettin' on his high horse with 'em both—an' what with one thing and another, after a couple o' days of it, there was trouble blowin' up like a typhoon.

An' trouble there was, mister.

It begun with Llewellyn comin' into the saloon, grumblin' and mutterin' to himself. The skipper scowls at him very darkly.

"What's the matter now, Mister Mate?" says he. "Still worryin' about your out-size friend, eh? Got any new theories today?"

LLEWELLYN'S been kind of dithery for days. He don't seem to have got over his scunner at Goliath—but now he flares up.

"He iss a tevil, look you!" he says. "You will not listen to me, no, Captain Sloggett—but there iss a day come, I am telling you, that—"

"Quiet, will you?" says Sloggett, and he's purple in the gills now. "Hell and damnation, what kind of croakin's all this, Mister Llewellyn? What's the matter, huh? You scared o' this feller?"

Llewellyn don't answer for a minute, only glowers at his plate. I dunno what he was goin' to say, except that it'd have been somethin' pretty hot—but just then there's the devil's own racket forward. Howlin' and yellin' like a pack of crazy lunatics, and the bos'n's voice cursin' blue murder.

The skipper jumps up. "Damme," he says, "now what? If it isn't one thing aboard this blasted hooker it's another. Here, Mr. Charteris, cut forward and see what's wrong!"

"Wrong!" says Llewellyn, half to himself, but plain enough to hear. "It iss no doubts what iss wrong. Only listen, I am telling you—"

"Wait!" says Sloggett to me, an' we listens. Yes, there's mighty little arguin' about who's mixed up in that barney. Someone out there's roarin' like a bloomin' town bull all of a sudden. You never heard nothin' like it in your life.

"He iss a tevil, I say!" mutters Llewellyn. "Only hark to him!"

Sloggett rips out a fathom and a half of language that was even hotter than the Red Sea just then, and makes for the door.

"Come with me!" he says over his shoulder, black as night.

Well, we went with him, the lot of us, on the run—and believe you me, if you'd been within earshot of that ruddy hullabaloo you'd have run too. An' when we got out on deck we stopped, dead.

The Algerian was one o' those old cows they used to turn out thirty years back, with a high fo'c's'le forward of the well-deck and Number One hatch. Down in the well-deck, right outside the fo'c's'le doors, here's what looks like a bally windmill—only the windmill's a man, an' the man's Goliath. He's standin' there with his feet spread, stripped to the waist, and he's doin' physical jerks and exercises with a couple o' men for dumb-bells. One's the bos'n, and the other's nobody less than our third officer—young feller named Anthony, he was, and he'd been in charge on the bridge while we was in the saloon. Goliath had the pair of them by the middle, an' the things he was doin' with 'em was just plain indecent.

"Go-good godfathers!" splutters the skipper. "Hey, you, forward there—Jones, Merritt, the rest of you—knock

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him down! Pull his legs from under him—"

THEY was crouched under the ship's sides, the deck-hands, an' you could see they didn't like the look of Goliath any more than you'd imagine. Nobody moved, anyway—an' Goliath went on with his monkeydoodlin's in slow time. I heard Llewellyn behind me give a kind of a grunt that was more like a sob.

Then Sloggett, he just goes off his rocker altogether.

"Mutiny!" he roars. "Mutiny an' assault on a certified officer—"

An' with that into the charthouse with him, and out again in a brace of shakes with a pistol in his hand. From the bridge rail he levels it at Goliath.

"Now!" he yells. "Pay attention there, you! I'm counting three, and then I'll fire. One—two—"

MacTavish grips him by the shoulder. "Hoots!" says he in a hurry. "Easy, sirr, easy—there's no necessity for sic doin's! Leave it tae me—I'll fix him in a brace o' shakes. A wee squirt, noo, wi' the hoses—"

"Hoses!" says Sloggett. "What's the good of hoses for that animal? He'll kill someone yet; he's a fighter, remember!"

Llewellyn groans, agreein'-like, but Mac chuckles. "Fighter?" he says. "Ou ay, he's a fighter—but there'll no be sae muckle fight in him in a while. I've a couple o' lads in the stokehold—wi' slice-bars—that'll shunt the fight out o' him. An' maybe a crack or twa behind the ear wi' a Stillson wrench might discourage him as weel!"

Well, they done it. It took better part of an hour's skirmishin' by Mac's black gang with the hoses and slice-bars, an' some dirty work with a wrench by Mac himself, but they got him down at last, and the irons on him. Sloggett looks at him lyin' there on the deck, stiff as a herring.

"Take him away!" he says, mighty bitter. "When we get to Aden, I'll have him crucified, by the livin' Jingo! There's no consecrated heathen goin' to do this kind o' thing to me! Mr. Anthony, what was all the row about, anyway?"

Young Anthony's been sitting with his head in his hands, tryin' to get clear o' the dizziness. He looks up.

"You better ask the bos'n, sir," says he. "I c-came in later. After the show'd started."

The bos'n's green an' yellow about the mug too, but he manages a grin.

"Dunno exackly 'ow it was, sir," he says. "Excep' that he'd been a-blowin' off pretty lavish about 'is size, and 'ow 'e'd whopped everyone from Marseilles to Madagascar, or some such, an' I told 'im to be careful."

He stops. "What else did you tell him?" Sloggett asks.

The bos'n shuffles. "Well, beggin' yer pardon, sir, an' so forth, I told 'im 'e might be a perishin' Goliath, but we'd a perishin' David aboard 'ere what was worth ten of 'im. Meanin' yourself, o' course, sir—an' no offense!"

I dunno—it may have been a bit o' the bos'n's invention, to butter up Sloggett, but it worked. The skipper turns to us.

"Hear that, gentlemen?" he says. "Here's someone who knows what's what, anyhow. Oh, yes, by thunder—I'm capable of dealin' with his kind!"

WELL, seein' as how it was Sloggett what had brought this prize packet o' trouble aboard in the first place, an' that it had been Mac

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and the engine room that had tackled him while Sloggett looked on an' did the spittin', that was goin' it a bit strong. Mac looked at me an' winked, but Llewellyn reared up on his little hind-legs.

"Indeed," says he, "but if it's a David that's needed, that's me, I believe. It's my name, whatever!"

Sloggett looks at him. "You?" he says. "Yes, we know your name all right, Mister," says he with a kind of a snigger. "But what's this—you aren't settin' up to be our big friend's tamer, are ye? Why, what next?"

It wasn't so much what he said as the sour, grimacin' way he said it. Like he wanted to make the mate feel small before everyone, right there on the deck. And he swung round on his heel and went stumpin' off aft, without another word or a look for anybody. Oh, the old Algerian was a happy ship, that hell's-fire afternoon, I do assure you.

What's more, Llewellyn ain't doin' nothin' to improve matters. He stands starin' after Sloggett with a kind of expression on his puss that reminds me of a loony I saw one time in Rangoon, an' that feller *puckarowed* six blackmen an' a white elephant before they'd done with him.

"So?" says he in a kind of a half-whisper. "That iss the way of it, eh? Well, well, well—"

And with that he goes off into his Welsh gibberin's, an' they sounded more like the devil's prayin'-bee than ever. MacTavish looks at me again, an' shrugs; he's a pretty sight just then, Mac is, bein' got up exclusive in a loincloth, carpet slippers, and a ten-inch Stillson—he'd a black eye and a couple o' teeth missin' as well after his little conversation with Goliath.

"Mphm!" says he, as the mate drifts out of hearin'. "Ay, proceedin's was whut I said, was it no? Weel, there'll be proceedin's, sure enough, Charteris, ma mannie! Ou ay, an' ye may lay to the same! This excurrsion's only beginnin'!"

He wasn't far wrong about that, neither, although it didn't turn out the way he thought. Next day was hotter than ever, o' course, an' nobody was feelin' any more sanctified, as you might say. Sloggett wasn't talkin' to anyone, Llewellyn looked half-barmy still an' kept hangin' round the door of the lamp room which is where they'd got Goliath in soak, an' Mac wasn't visible at all. He was down in the engines, tryin' to knock more than seven knots out o' them, which had been his parstime an' delight ever since he'd been on the Algerian.

ROUND noon, the skipper on the bridge was lookin' at the patent log an' cursin' alternative, when here's a tremenjus racket from below, a lot more purple swearin'—Mac this time—an' the engines stop dead. Sloggett runs to the voice-pipe an' bellers down it, dancin' like a bloomin' marionette; but he can't get no answer, an' no wonder, seein' there's clouds o' steam an' general hell comin' from the engine-room, an' everybody's runnin' about an' tumblin' over one another till you'd think the Algerian was headed for the bottom. It's not for maybe ten minutes that Mac comes up, cool as you please, with a whackin' great scald down the side of his face to improve his looks still more.

Sloggett pounces on him.

"What the crimson so-an'-so d'ye mean by this?" he says, ravin' like a bedlamite. "What d'ye mean by it, you?"

Mac looks him up an' down.

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"Weel," says he, "since that's the way ye put it, sirr, the matter's just this—she's bruk down, the ill-favored old blastie, an' there's little wonder, the way she's been starvit a' these years—"

"Broken down!" screams the skipper. "Why, you whisky-peddlin' son of a Scotch tinker, how dare you come to me with a yarn like that? Get below and start those engines right away, d'ye hear? Think I'm goin' to hang about here, just because you're not competent to run a coffee-grinder like this one?"

MacTavish don't say anything at all for a minute, but it's easy to see what he's thinkin'. Captain Sloggett was on his own bridge, in command of his own ship, an' you may or may not know that the Board o' Trade an' the law between 'em have got some funny little jokers up their sleeve, designed special for such circumstances.

Mac's wonderin' whether it's worth riskin' his ticket an' maybe six months jug for the pleasure o' fetchin' Sloggett a couple o' belts in his fat jaw. An' finally he comes to the conclusion it ain't, for he turns away with a sigh.

"Aweel!" says he, lookin' at his knuckles very lovin'. "'Twad be a great an' holy worrk, MacTavish, but it isna to be! It's a poor, onsatisfactory world at best, as weel ye know. Captain Sloggett, sirr!" He addresses the skipper most formal an' polite. "I've the honor to report, sirr, that the connectin'-rods are sheared below the bushin's, sirr, an' the crankshaft's six inches out o' true. Such bein' the case, I'm about to draw fires, an' maself an' the engineers'll pass a pleasant an' profitable holiday, fishin' for sprats!"

And with that he grins very fiendish, makes a gesture with a couple o' fingers not gen'rally seen in polite society, and away with him down below again, whistlin'. Sloggett runs to the rail an' leans over it.

"Get out o' my sight!" he chokes. "Get out o' my sight, you disrespectful, guzzlin' Scotch ape, or it'll be the worse for you!"

He's fair apoplectic, an' no wonder. Broke down in the middle of the Red Sea here, off the liner-track, and we'd no wireless in them days; and a first-class, three-cornered row in progress between himself, his first officer, and his engineer. Sweet muckup all round, if you ask me, and Anthony and I, that was the only two outside of it, didn't relish the idea one little bit.

"To hell with 'em!" he mutters to me. "We'll have a major catastrophe on the high seas here before we're through!"

"Nothin' more likely!" says I. "They're askin' for it."

WELL, there we were, as I've said, broke down an' paralytic, in a temperature enough to fry paint off a door, an' with mighty little chance of gettin' a tow out of it, for days anyway—maybe weeks. There was dhows, o' course; but they ain't so good, towin' four-thousand-ton freighters. Besides, they'd the reputation of being given to funny business now and again. I'd heard tales, and so'd Anthony. So'd Mac for that matter.

So when, a couple of hours after the smash, one of them comes nosin' up, promiscuous-like, I wasn't what you might call so happy. Nice-lookin' cup-o-tea, too, this one was, with a face like a fish and a eye like Judas, and cargo-snuppin' was his trade, same as ourselves, it seemed.

Leastways, that's what he told the

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skipper, who had him come alongside and gave him a letter to the consul in the nearest port—Jiddah, a hundred mile away or more. Paid him five pound for deliverin' it, too, an' John Arab was full o' blessin's an' glorifications as he sailed away.

Mac was standin' with me lookin' out of a porthole.

"Humph!" says he, an' that's all.

"What d'ye mean?" I asks him, for he'd got somethin' in that old noddle of his again.

He turns inboard. "Mean?" says he. "Ou, nothin'—only we've a more complete, morocco-bound edition o' fool up yonder on the bridge than I thought, Charteris, ma mannie. I'd no ha' believed it possible, either!"

"Why?" says I. "Think there's any risk from those coves?" I nods at the Arab.

Mac chuckles. "Risk be dommed!" he says. "It's a cast-iron certainty, ma wee felly! There'll be a dozen of 'em at us the nicht. Ye'd better awa' wi' ye and see if ye can persuade yon fat sumph to stand by if he disna want his throat slit. Maself, I'm mobilizin' the stokehold immediate!"

Well, that was plain enough talk, and it's what I believed myself, too. So I went up towards the bridge, thinkin' how in the devil's name me and Anthony was goin' to tackle the skipper, when lo an' behold, here's Llewellyn, prowlin' round as per usual outside the lamproom door. He'd a regular sentry-go of it when off duty.

"Afternoon, sir!" says I, for I'd an idea he might listen to reason. "Might I have a word with you, Mr. Llewellyn?"

He stares at me, kind of blindish, and I thought to meself, Jerusalem, here's another of 'em—batty as a bedbug. He was, too.

"Mr. Charteris," he says to me, just as it might have been a deacon in church, "I'll thank you to leave me! Seeing that I'm David, look you, I am busy!"

AND he points to the door, where there's a kind o' rumblin' and roarin' goin' on, quiet and continuous—Goliath growlin' about bein' in there and I don't blame him, neither, for it must've been three shades hotter than Gehenna. Llewellyn wags his head at it.

"Ay—ay!" he says. "Goliath of Gath you are, sure, but I am David, and your master, do you hear me? In a while—in a while we shall see—yes, indeed—in a while—"

He goes on maunderin' so, under his breath and pacin' to and fro. There wasn't much doubt, as I've said, what was ailin' Mr. David Llewellyn now. A strait-jacket was what he was askin' for, whether it was from the heat or what. But that didn't help us none, you can bet your boots—we'd plenty of crazy things on board the Algerian just then. So I went up to the bridge, and had a look at our other prize cuckoo.

He was pacin' up and down, very important, full as an egg of self-conceit an' general ain't-I-the-cheese.

"Ah, Mr. Charteris!" says he. "That little difficulty's settled, I'm glad to say. The consul in Jiddah will wire Suez, and we'll have a tug out in no time. Too bad, of course—but what'd you expect with the kind of engineers they serve us out with? Damned impudent ruffian, Mr. Charteris, eh?"

"Yessir!" I says, disciplined. He looks at me out of the corner of his old eye, and I c'n see he's wonderin' whether I'm on the level or not.

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"Humph!" says he. "Glad to hear you say so, Mr. Charteris. There's a lot of insubordination aboard here that's got to be checked—checked with a firm hand. I won't have anybody crossin' me on me own bridge, an' that's fair warnin'!"

Fair warnin' it was, all right, and I dropped the idea of warnin' him about the dhows—dropped it like a hot coal. We'd have to look after all that without him—or Llewellyn either—if Mac was right, and I thought he was. I made a few more pious remarks, agreein' with everything he said, and then slipped down to young Anthony.

"Look here, me joker!" says I. "It's time you and me put our heads together, if we want to see Thames mud again—"

"I believe you!" he says.

Well, supper that evening was a rum kind of meal, because Sloggett, Anthony and me was the only ones present—Llewellyn bein' still on duty, as you might say, over the lamproom, and Mac and the engineers up to some hankypanky of their own down there. The night was still and clammy, with thunder hangin' somewhere about; just the kind o' weather for the dhows. The Algerian rolled a bit in the swell, driftin' helpless in the currents, with riding-lights showin'. About as easy a mark as you'd find anywhere, she was, for anyone thinkin' of a bit of piracy.

AFTER we'd finished eatin'—and listenin' to old Highty-tighty expandin' himself—Anthony and I went on deck. There wasn't any noise, except for Goliath still carryin' on forward there in the lamproom, and from below a kind of a clink-clink like a blacksmith's shop.

"Hullo!" I says. "Mac's got a furnace alight again."

He'd drawn 'em as he said, but there was one goin' now. Anthony and I peeped down the hatch, cautious, an' here's Mac comin' up. He grins at us, lookin' more like the livin' Beelzebub than ever.

"Weel," says he, "an' whut now, me bonnie lads?"

"Whatcher doin' down there?" I asks him.

He puts his finger to the side of his nose. "Preparin' a warrm reception for oor guests," says he. "Red-hot rivets an' such—it's all we've got, barrin' Sloggett's wee gun. Did ye tell him, by the way?"

"No," I says. "It didn't seem a suitable time. He's in one of his tantrums—and Llewellyn's mad."

"Ye needna tell me that!" says Mac. "I've ma eyes still about me. He's—Losh! Whut's yon?"

He might well have asked, for the rumpus that had bust out all of a sudden would have scared a hippopotamus. And there wasn't any doubt what it was, neither—we'd heard that bellerin' before. Friend Goliath had got sick of the lamproom, an' come out, takin' most of it with him, by the sound.

"Crumbs!" says Mac—and here comes Llewellyn, tumblin' into his arms. He's fair yammerin' with fright, an' all the David business an' the bounce is gone out of him.

"S-save me!" he yelps. "He's comin'—"

Mac takes a single look round, and slams him into the nearest open door, which happens to be the cook's pantry. Then he drags out that ruddy Stillson of his an' spits on his hands. Just then, he's a match for all the Goliaths in Gath or elsewhere.

But the big lummox don't come our way. He runs round the port side, bangin' and yellyhooin' somethin'

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wicked, and up on the bridge with him, five steps at a time.

"Gawd!" says I. "The skipper—"

With that we made a break for topside, all three of us, because whatever kind of a so-and-so Sloggett was, he was master of the Algerian and—well, we didn't just see no hunk o' cat meat with notions dissectin' him, as you might say. An' that's what Goliath sounded like; as if he wouldn't be partic'lar how he started or where, but once he put them excavator-shovels of hands on anyone, look out!

Well, the skipper'd got his gun, an' he takes a crack at Goliath all right; but what with one thing and another, the dark and so forth, he didn't connect, it seems. So wha's he do but bolt into the chartroom, an' slam the door, just as Goliath comes across the bridge like a typhoon on two feet.

It's pretty well-built, that deckhouse, what with steel and timber and so forth, and it holds Goliath for a minute, although I wouldn't have gambled much on the door lastin' more than a kick or two from his tootsies. Anyway, when we gets there, there he is, prancin' round in the half-light, makin' noises like a steam calliope with the bellyache, an' generally thirstin' for blood.

"Now what?" says I, stopping. Remember that excep' for Mac's wrench we was all of us unarmed, an' that houndin' gorilla there didn't look invitin'. Mac stops, too, a bit flummoxed—and in that minute they were aboard us.

WHO? The dhows, o' course—John Arab and his friends, out for a good lootin' proposition. There was about five dhows of them, an' they'd sneaked up on us in the dark, muffled oars and all, and now here they were, full o' beans an' good humor, ready to slit our gullets.

Lucky for us, they'd come over the stern and quarter first, leavin' the bows alone. So the fo'c's'le crowd didn't get rushed first go, an' Mac had time to do some quick thinkin'. He runs to the forward bridge rail.

"Lights!" he yells, "Cargo electrics! Switch on, below there!"

Someone in Mac's engine room must have been pretty wideawake, for on they goes inside five seconds—a couple o' 500 watt floods on the forward and after derricks. Their switches were over the dynamos, an' that saved us, maybe, for John Arab stopped his little skirmishin's, blinded. A 500 watt electric in a pitch-black Red Sea night looks kind of startlin', if you get me.

"Fo'c's'le!" Mac bawls again—he'd taken command now, not much doubt o' that. "Bos'n—hold 'em where they are, till ye're wanted. Dinna cam' oot, now! Charteris, you an' Anthony scupper yon big sawney—I dinna care how! I'm goin' below!"

He's off down the ladder like a hundred o' bricks, shoutin' for his black gang and the red-hot stuff they'd got. Anthony grabs me by the arm.

"Where's Goliath?" he says.

True enough—where was he? He wasn't yammerin' round the deckhouse any more, anyhow. The bridge was empty.

"Crimes!" I says, peekin' round the corner mighty cautious.

There'd been the devil's own lot of howlin' goin' on aft since them electrics lit up, but now it altered its tune sudden, as you might say. I dunno how to describe it—kind of Gawda'-mighty-ish instead o' blue-fire-an'-murder, I daresay; an' strike me if there was any wonder. They'd Goliath at 'em.

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He'd scrambled down off the bridge, all arms and legs an' paws like the bloomin' gorilla he was. What John Arab thought he was I don't know, and he didn't have much time to figure it out. Goliath waded in and began chuckin' them overside, two-handed, same as you or me chuckin' spuds into a bucket. I b'lieve he bruk one or two necks to begin with.

ANYHOW, there he was, goin' to beat all hell, and Arabs flyin' over the rail in a cascade. They'd guns, some of 'em—gaspipe affairs, but they'd work all right. As we was runnin' aft to lend a hand, I see one John Arab take a pop at Goliath from short range, six feet maybe. Goliath give a kind of a squeal, the way you and me do when we've been stung by a wasp, an' reaches for the feller. No, I won't say what he did to him—might unsettle that wine o' yours there!

Well, whatever it was, that finished the dhows. Them coastwise Arabs ain't so much, they tell me; different than the boys up on the desert. I dunno about that, but Goliath had 'em subdued all right, an' what he didn't persuade Mac did. The engine-room bunch come tearin' in with a dozen shovelfuls o' red-hot fixin's, an' begins ladlin' 'em over into the dhows alongside—an' what with one thing and another it wasn't so long before we was alone again on the sea.

Mac looks at me, pantin'. "Weel," says he, "an' thot's thot, laddie! A verra sotisfoctory terrmination to the evenin', eh? But in Heeven's name, wull ye look at yon Goliath?"

He was standin' in the middle of the pool of light thrown by the big electric, arms folded in his great hairy beard as per usual, blood runnin' from a long rip round his ribs—where John Arab had plugged him, it was—an' glarin' like a wild bull. Them whackin' yellow eyes of his, rollin' an' snappin' from under his beetling brows, pretty near gives me the horrors then, and I c'n see 'em now, almost. An' then, so help me, if he don't stamp his foot an' start in singin'!

What? Yes, singin'. 'Twasn't like any kind o' singin' I'd ever heard, nor you neither I daresay. Kind o' chantin' affair, deep down in that barrel of a chest of his. Fair give you the creeps, it did.

"Preserve us a'—" says Mac in a whisper.

There's a patter o' footsteps close to us, and someone runs out in that ring o' light an' faces up to Goliath. It's Llewellyn, and he's finally on the skids for Bedlam, by the look of him.

"You!" he screams out. "Stand and fight, Philistine!"

He's a sight to make you blink, the mate is, without a rag on him—naked as Mac or nakeder—and he's a sort of a gadget in his hand he's fiddlin' with all the time. Goliath shuffles nearer him, still goin' on with his war-dance; and Llewellyn lets drive with what he's got in his fist. There's a kind of a loud thump—an' Goliath's stopped singin', but not dancin'. He's really dancin' now, with a fist up to his eye, swearin' somethin' colossal in his own tongue. He makes a grab at Llewellyn, an' then we all falls on him together.

Mr. Charteris began to laugh in his irritating fashion, just at the high lights of his stories.

"Well?" I said testily. "What about it? What'd Llewellyn got?"

Charteris continued to shake. "Better look it up," he advised. "It's in 'Oly Writ, as I was tellin' you. Wasn't it David that slew Goliath with a sling an' pebbles out o' the brook?"

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"Certainly," I said. "But I don't see—"

"O' course you don't," said Charteris kindly. "You wasn't there. But this here Llewellyn, he was, and he'd rigged himself up a sling with his suspenders in the cook's pantry there, an' gone to war all proper."

"What did he sling?" I said.

Charteris looked at me out of the corner of his eye. "Well," he said, "it ain't dignified, and it ain't heroic, but it's the truth, same as I always tell. Llewellyn 'ad got 'is pebble from the brook all right—but in the hurry an' what-not he'd made a bit of a boss of it. What he's just hit Goliath with, plunk on the end of his squashy boko, is just a two-pound onion—a Spanish onion Barbecue had been ready to peel for tomorrow's mulligan!"

"An onion?" I blinked.

"An onion," Charteris repeated gravely. "Mighty effective, too, I don't mind tellin' yer—old Goliath, he had a black eye for a week, until we was rescued an' run back to Suez to put Mr. Llewellyn where he belonged, pore feller. Yes, that was the way of it—"

There was a silence, while I watched the stevedores sweating below us, and marveled at the artistry of my herculean friend.

"Yes," I murmured cannily, "they are rather strong!"

Charteris sat up. "Wodjer mean?" he inquired venomously. "What's strong? These here yarns that I have been tellin'?"

"Onions," I said with finality. "Just onions!"

THE END

Chinese Paid Taxes with Poisonous Snakes

PROBABLY the most welcomed, as well as unusual system of tax collection was that introduced by the Chinese more than 1,100 years ago, when an Imperial order decreed that a certain species of deadly poisonous snake would be accepted in lieu of the usual tax payment.

This species of snake, common only to the wilds of Hu Kuang, was said to be fatal "even to the grass and trees it may chance to touch," and its bite absolutely incurable. Yet, if caught and properly prepared and its flesh dried and made into cakes, it was considered a valuable medicine for soothing excitement, expelling evil spirits, healing leprous sores and removing sloughing flesh. The dried flesh of this snake became a cure-all with the court physicians.

In order to obtain a plentiful supply of these snakes, an Imperial order decreed that they would be accepted in payment of taxes.

This decree brought about a general stampede among the Chinese for the Hu Kuang region, so anxious were some people to risk their lives in snake catching and thereby escape the burden of tax payments. Peace and contentment prevailed among those few who were able to escape the fangs of the desired snake—death to those who failed, and poverty, misery and beggary faced those unable to obtain snakes.

—*Clarence A. Pope.*

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Fool's Mate

By J. D. NEWSOM

The bottle missed his head by inches

"I'll break him if it's the last thing I do"—and then began a deadly feud within the Legion's ranks

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

LEGIONNAIRE THOMAS WEST, former American air pilot, had found his way into the French Foreign Legion, because he was through as an aviator. A plane crack-up had made him lose his "nerve," and consequently he had lost his job. But his wife had gone on spending money in Paris at a fast clip—so that West finally joined the Legion and told her to get a divorce.

West's friend in the Legion, Robert Milburn, an English actor of the London stage, was in the Legion because of his gin-sodden constitution. Thirtyish and graying, dissipation had led him to a temperamental disregard for contracts, managers, and his public, with the result: the Legion.

Henri Toxandre, formerly a newspaper correspondent on the *Gazette Impartiale,* a French paper whose chief function was ferreting out graft and malfeasance in high places, came to the realization that he knew too much for his continued safe presence in France, and so, to save his hide, he decided to serve under the Tricolor in foreign lands.

It was at the Rendez-Vous des Légionnaires, a drinking resort of the Legion Post that the foregoing trio was responsible for a free-for-all brawl in this rowdy establishment owned by Señor Lugnatti.

This story began in the Argosy for November 16

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One day when the Legion troops are returning from an exhausting march, West spies his wife, Constance, among the watching crowd of townspeople. In the face of regulations, he shouts a greeting to her; gets a week in solitary; and after his confinement goes to visit her at the Hotel Continental, a place where Legionnaires of ordinary rank are not admitted.

With the help of his wife, West plans to escape by auto and begin life anew. They are just about to leave when West is apprehended by a detective, and carried back to the Legion post.

Meanwhile Toxandre, who has been made a corporal, decides that his snooty English friend, Milburn, needs a lesson in deference. So Toxandre assigns him to washing dishes under Chief Sergeant Sinigaglia, who, on recognizing Milburn as a London actor, treats him to the best cuisine and drink, and otherwise makes a soft berth for him. This enrages Toxandre.

After West's imprisonment, it is learned that Cornelia has taken a job at the Rendez-Vous des Légionnaires. Toxandre expresses to Milburn more than an ordinary interest in her, explaining that he will be glad to look after her while her husband is so many months in prison.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER ARREST.

THE uncertainty was more than Toxandre could bear.

"No bad news, I hope?" he inquired eagerly.

"Bad?" repeated Milburn, coming out of his trance. Suddenly he burst into peals of laughter. "It's not bad, it's merely insane. It's from Harry Rosenstein, my agent, in London. . . . He wants to know whether I'll sign a contract with the cinema people." He spoke with difficulty between spasms of mirth. "In Hollywood. He wants to know if I'll go to America next April. He wants an answer at once. And I thought I was finished!"

Toxandre shot him a swift, uneasy glance. "But you have other plans," he said with a cheerfulness so forced and artificial that it was painful. "This agent of yours, he will be astounded when he learns that you have signed a five-year contract without his knowledge."

"Contract—what contract?"

"With the Legion. A real contract! But I do not have to remind *you* of such things. You are a true Legionnaire. You are satisfied. It is remarkable the change in you since you came to Sidi-bel-Abbes. You have grown strong and healthy."

"What the devil are you burbling about?" retorted Milburn. "You don't think I'd be out here, do you, had I been able to foresee this? Don't be absurd. I must get in touch with Rosenstein at once."

Toxandre could not sit still. He pushed back his chair, stood up, sat down again, and fingered his beard and helped himself to one of Milburn's cigarettes.

"Please," he begged, "Milburn, you must forget all about this . . . this offer. You are upset, that is natural, but when you calm down you will agree with me: the time for such offers is past."

He pleaded eloquently, but he pleaded in vain. When he paused for breath, Milburn, who had not listened to a word he had said, remarked:

"I'll have to get in touch with him by wire."

"Refusing?"

"Accepting."

"You must not do it!" Toxandre's voice was shrill with emotion. "The Legion . . ."

"Oh, confound you and the Legion," retorted Milburn. "I wish you'd stop squeaking about it. You and your damned ideals. You bore me. Do you understand, m'dear fellow: you bore

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me? There's no romance attached to poking two feet of steel into a man's belly or to shooting out his brains. And that's what all this blather and nonsense amounts to: killing people."

"The cause we serve . . ." Toxandre began but Milburn swept such considerations aside.

"Twaddle! Man, don't you ever grow weary of your own flamboyant patriotism?"

A gray tinge crept into Toxandre's cheeks. The flanges of his nostrils dilated and quivered.

"Milburn," he said sharply, "you have no right to talk in this fashion. You must promise me not to send this telegram."

"I'll promise nothing of the sort."

"I warn you," said Corporal Toxandre, "I cannot allow you to use such language. Much as I like you, I must ask you to remember that I am your superior."

"Are you really? In that case let me be explicit: this evening I shall send a cable to my agent telling him to sign the Hollywood contract. And that, pure and noble minded corporal, is that."

"You are not thinking of deserting?"

"You are free to use your imagination as you may see fit."

Toxandre licked his stiff, dry lips. "You have not forgotten what happened to West?"

"Hardly. Nevertheless, I am going to Hollywood, in California, in the United States of America. I shall make their preposterous pictures. And after that, London again. I'm coming back. Nothing's going to stop me. Nothing!"

"Milburn," said Toxandre, choosing his words with great care, "you can not hope to succeed. I will not allow you to succeed. You have taken an oath. You will have to live up to it. If you try to evade your obligations I shall not hesitate to have you stopped . . . as I stopped West. Yes, I kept him from deserting. I had to because my duty to my regiment comes first always. Do not compel me to have you court-martialed."

MILBURN drew a deep breath. His face turned to flint as he said: "He trusted you. He took you into his confidence. You called yourself his friend. You knew his wife was waiting for him . . . and you denounced him . . . not for thirty pieces of silver but for a couple of stripes. Is that right?"

"I had no choice. My promotion . . ."

Milburn's hand closed on the neck of a bottle. He raised it an inch or so off the table, then dropped it again as if it had burned his fingers, and clasped his hands behind his back.

"Get out of here, you nasty little blighter," he ordered, and his voice stung like the lash of a whip. "Get out or I'll break every damn' bone in your body."

His eyes were so malevolent, so full of execration that a chill went crawling down Toxandre's spine.

The interview he decided had lasted quite long enough. There was no point in prolonging the futile argument: Milburn, as usual, had had too much to drink. His befuddled mind could not grasped precise shades of meaning, nor differentiate between right and wrong. He was incurable and bound to come to a bad end.

There and then Toxandre washed his hands of Milburn's fate. He could not afford to associate with such an irrational, intemperate creature, not

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even though it meant that hereafter he would have to forego many of the minor luxuries to which he had become accustomed since Milburn had been paying the bills. So much the better! No longer would he permit himself to be corrupted by English gold, that traditional bugbear of his own fair land. He would live on his pay, accepting favors from no one.

Swiftly, but not without dignity, he backed across the room. When his hand closed on the door knob, he said, and he spoke in French to accentuate the gulf that separated them now: "I am not alarmed by your threats. When you come to your senses you will perceive that I have done my best to keep you from making a fool of yourself. Take my advice: do not send that telegram. You are a Legionnaire and . . ."

And that was as far as his little homily was destined to go. He didn't have a chance to move. With startling rapidity, Milburn pounced upon him, swung him around, flung the door wide open, and kicked him out into the passage. It was a beautiful, a masterly kick. It would have scored a drop goal at a distance of at least a hundred yards, so swift was it, so accurate, so full of vigor.

The force of the impact, which almost dislocated Milburn's toes, sent Toxandre across the hall with the airy grace of a ballet dancer. He struck the opposite wall, rebounded and sat down. Milburn flicked his cap in his face.

"Get out," ordered Milburn. "No! Don't say anything. Don't open your mouth or I'll stamp on it, you loathesome little worm. And bear this in mind: if ever I find out that you have been annoying West's wife, if ever you have the gall to speak to her, I rather think I shall horsewhip you."

Toxandre got up. He did not attempt to chastise Milburn. Not one word did he utter. Not a single one! He cut him dead.

Squaring his shoulders he walked down the hall and through the kitchen with a firm tread. But as soon as he reached the first bend in the driveway, and could no longer be seen from the kitchen windows, he pressed both hands against the base of his spine and emitted a grown which was hollow.

"The pig," he said. "The dirty, treacherous pig. He thinks he is safe because there were no witnesses. Telling me to keep away from that girl. Wants her for himself, I'll bet, the hypocrite! But I'll get him. I'll break him if it's the last thing I do on earth. Sneering at my patriotism, the blackguard!"

IT was ten minutes to six when Sinigaglia dashed into the room and thrust the pass at Milburn.

"There you are," he announced, wiping his glistening, crimson face with a greasy towel. "I stop everything to get it for you. Captain Fauchon, he thinks I am a fool. He says: 'What's the idea of sending a man to town at this hour when you are preparing supper?' I had to lie, *hein?* I said we were short of *echalotte*. I had to say something!"

Quiet no longer reigned in the kitchen. A twelve course banquet for forty-six guests was being prepared by a staff of temperamental prima donnas not one of whom could give an order without shrieking, nor put a skillet on the stove without a deafening crash, nor move from one point to another without barging into someone else and yelling, and calling the saints to witness the clumsiness, the dumbness, the blindness of all his colleagues.

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And the bedlam was only beginning. It would not reach its crescendo until the main course was on its way to the dining room.

Milburn folded the pass and put it in his pocket.

"Can't thank you enough for having gone to so much trouble."

"Keep out of trouble," urged Sinigaglia. "What makes you want to go to town on such a hot night? It's a woman, *hein?*"

"That's one reason," admitted Milburn. "I want to find out how she's getting along."

Sinigaglia snorted. "No woman in Sid-bel-Abbes is worth a minute of your time. They're bad, all of them."

"This one isn't."

"They never are! Look at me, *hein?* Cooking for these soldiers on the cheap. No money—any of them. I rack my brains to make economies and Captain Fauchon he keeps at me. 'You spend too much. It is too expensive!' Pretty soon I forget how to cook, all because for two minutes I lose my head."

"That's not one of my failings," said Milburn, glancing at the clock on the desk.

"I hope not. Anyway, I expect you at nine sharp. The banquet will be over. Then we eat. Don't forget we are having a *pilaff a l'orientale.* It's simmering on the back of the stove. Nine sharp, remember. It will be good to sit down and have a talk."

"On the dot," promised Milburn.

Sinigaglia placed a hand on Milburn's shoulder as they were about to part.

"I do not like that corporal friend of yours. Don't trust him. He looks slippery."

"He is," Milburn said placidly. "That's why I'm going to town: to warn this girl to give him a wide berth. I wish I were more aggressive. I'd love to wring his neck."

Sinigaglia gave him a shove. "You wouldn't do a thing like that. Don't spoil your appetite with too many apéritifs while you are, what you call, warning this girl."

MILBURN reached the post office just before closing time. A sallow-faced, grumpy woman at the telegraph desk snatched the message out of his hand and sniffed angrily because it was written in English, a language she did not understand.

It read:

SUMMERING IN NORTH AFRICA STOP IDEAL CLIMATE FOR INVALIDS AND INEBRIATES STOP MEDICAL PROFESSION ASTOUNDED BY MY RECUPERATIVE POWERS STOP AM A REFORMED CHARACTER WORTHY OF YOUR UTMOST DEVOTION STOP SOLICITOR REFORWARDED YOUR LETTER STOP NOT IMPRESSED BY FILM OFFER BUT AUTHORIZE YOU TO ACCEPT CONTRACT STOP MY MOVEMENTS INDEFINITE BUT WILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOU BY MAIL STOP CAMELS COMMA NOTED FOR THEIR ABSTEMIOUSNESS COMMA ABOUND OUT HERE STOP YOU WOULD LOVE THEM STOP ADVISE TRIP TO ZOO FOR YOUR EDIFICATION STOP MILBURN.

"And you have money to pay for all this?" the woman demanded, peering at him suspiciously, fearing an indecent practical joke.

She stared, too, at the bills he slid across the counter. She felt and sniffed them one by one, then hurried off to confer with the *receveur,* a thin, goiterous man in a black alpaca jacket. They put their heads together and talked in whispers and darted swift looks at Milburn while the *receveur*

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translated the cable, weighing the meaning of each word.

Milburn, they concluded, in common with most Englishmen, was mad. None but a madman would waste good money cabling such absurdities. For the sake of appearances the postmaster fussed up to the window and snapped:

"Strange message, this. Very strange. Not a code message is it by any chance?"

Wearied by the everlasting surliness of all civilians, Milburn gently blew a thread of cigarette smoke in the *receveur's* face.

"You have read it," he observed. "You have digested it syllable by syllable. You have worried it to death. My very good Monsieur, you know perfectly well that this is not a code message. Why *do* you ask such insane questions?"

"You refer here to a contract . . ."

"It is none of your business if I refer to ten contracts," retorted Milburn, growing hot under the collar. "Are you going to accept this message, yes or no?"

Much to his regret the postmaster had to accept it. There was no law empowering him to reject or to censor telegrams written by Legionnaires.

Milburn scooped up the change the sallow-faced woman flung at him and marched out of the office. He was on edge. Now that his mind was made up, now that he knew that in a few days or weeks he would be out of the Legion, he was exasperated beyond endurance by the thousand and one mean and petty incidents that had marked all his contacts with the townspeople.

Everything rubbed him the wrong way. The heat, the bayonet slapping against his thigh, the squeak of his hobnailed boots on the asphalt pavement, the pompous expression on the face of the *gendarme* who stopped him and examined his pass as he hurried down the street toward the *Rendez-Vous*.

He was anxious to reach the café and talk to Cornelia West before the crowd arrived. He intended to force her to accept the one hundred and fifty pounds he carried in his money belt and insist that she leave Sidi-bel-Abbes until West was released.

BUT the *gendarme* held onto his pass so long that by the time he reached the *Rendez-Vous* Legionnaires were beginning to gather around the entrance, waiting for the doors to open. And as he neared the group Corporal Toxandre stepped forward and barred his way.

Said Toxandre with crushing superiority:

"A word with you, Legionnaire Milburn. You have been transferred back to duty. Pichard is taking your place at the club. Report to Sergeant Brankovich at once."

He found it hard to conceal his satisfaction. On his return to barracks that afternoon he had gone straight to Sergeant Brankovich and had told him about the appalling breach of discipline he had witnessed at the officers' club: A soldier of the second class fraternizing with a chief-sergeant!

"I am worried about Milburn," he had explained. "He has the makings of a good soldier, but now, alas, he is demoralized. Far be it from me to criticize Chief Sergeant Sinigaglia but . . ."

But Sergeant Brankovich, who had the greatest contempt for all indoor men, had been only too pleased to take the matter up with the adjutant. A vast amount of whispering had gone on behind office doors.

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Nothing, every one agreed, could be done about Sinigaglia. No charges could be brought against him on the strength of Toxandre's evidence, for his influence over the colonel and the other senior officers was so great that the complaint would certainly be dismissed.

Milburn, however, was in a different category. By working fast, before Sinigaglia got wind of the plot, he could be snatched away from the chief cook and subjected to an intensive course of discipline and taught that special privileges do not exist in the Legion.

There had not been a single hitch, and as soon as the necessary orders had been issued Toxandre, nursing a large bruise and an even larger grudge, had limped over to the *Rendez-Vous* to intercept Milburn.

His triumph was complete. Milburn, the perfidious snob, wasn't even going to have the satisfaction of seeing Cornelia West.

The perfidious snob, unfortunately, did not appear to grasp the fact that he was being given an order by his superior officer. He turned that fishy stare of his upon Toxandre; a stare which seemed to reach down inside the corporal and probe the painful lump on the end of his spine.

The corners of Milburn's mouth twitched as he said: "I have a pass."

"It is worthless," rasped Toxandre. "Don't argue with me, do you hear? Get back to barracks immediately!"

A CROWD was beginning to gather: soldiers, women in cheap, flashy clothes, dubious men with cloth caps pulled down over their eyes, all the uneasy riff-raff that preys on a Legionnaire with two sous in his pocket.

"My pass," Milburn said in a soothing tone which nearly caused Toxandre to froth at the mouth, "my pass, Corporal, is signed by Chief-Sergeant Sinigaglia. Have you a written order, Corporal, superseding this invaluable document?"

"An orderly is hunting for you this very minute," Toxandre retorted. "He has gone to the club. Go there at once. Collect your kit and report to Sergeant Brankovich."

"Just so," agreed Milburn. "When the orderly tracks me down I shall obey with celerity and dispatch. Meanwhile, Corporal, it so happens that I am going to have a drink. Will you be good enough to stand aside?"

The crowd began to laugh and Toxandre saw red. Clenching his fists he shouted: "If you do not obey, after the third summons, I shall place you under arrest! Legionnaire Milburn I order you to go back to barracks. Will you obey—yes or no?"

"Can you sit down in comfort?" inquired Milburn. "Wouldn't an air cushion help you?"

"Second summons!" cried Toxandre, and in the same breath he added, "Third summons! You are under arrest! About turn . . ."

Milburn took a packet of cigarettes from his pocket, placed one between his lips and lighted it. He flicked the burned match over Toxandre's shoulder.

"Corporal," he remarked, "I have met many men in my day. I thought I was a fair judge of human nature, but you are a revelation. This sportsman," he added, addressing some nearby Legionnaires, "denounced one of his comrades, supplied the evidence that sent him to prison, and is now itching to make love to his comrade's wife."

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The onlookers stirred uneasily, and a soldier exclaimed: "So that's why he was promoted so quickly! I've had my doubts about him for a long time."

And another voice muttered: "We don't need such vermin in the Legion."

"Fall in four men," ordered Toxandre. "You, there, and you . . . March this Legionnaire to the guardroom."

But his order went unheeded. A ripple of laughter swept the crowd. It was not a pleasant sound. Toxandre's heart skipped a beat, then raced wildly, bumping against his ribs.

Out of the lamplit dusk a face peered at him over a Legionnaire's shoulder. A thin, hard face with smouldering eyes and a scarlet mouth all puckered with hatred.

Toxandre winced as he recognized Mireille.

He had not seen her since the night when the *Rendez-Vous* had been torn to pieces. Lugnatti had made a clean sweep of his old staff so that his customers, when they came trooping back, might not be reminded of their own deplorable conduct.

"'Fall in four men,'" jeered Mireille. "I'll give you four men, you toad! I'd like to see four strong men string you up to the nearest lamp post. I lost my job because of you. I'm down in the gutter because of you!"

"Gently, gently!" cautioned Milburn. "Don't make too much noise or we'll have the police swarming around us like hornets. I need your help. If I touch this stinking corporal I'll land in prison.

"But I must get in there and warn the girl so that, if he starts anything, she'll know what to do to him."

"He's not going to stop you," promised a burly Legionnaire, hitching up his belt. "If he tries to follow you he'll come up against a blank wall. He'll lose his stripes if he so much as breathes on me. I know the law."

IT dawned upon Toxandre that his stripes were not doing him the slightest bit of good in the midst of that ugly and sullen mob. He looked very frail, very . . . perishable. Mireille's presence rattled him.

There was no telling what such a harpy might not do. At any moment a knife might slide into his back which suddenly felt as wide as all outdoors and pathetically vulnerable. The nearest *gendarme* was far, far away, at the other end of the avenue. He was too busy supervising the six automobiles, the landau drawn by two swaybacked horses, and the pushcart which constituted Sidi-bel-Abbes' traffic problem, to bother about a handful of soldiers and underworld characters loitering on the sidewalk outside the *Rendez-Vous*.

Milburn, Toxandre told himself, would have to be dealt with at some later date when conditions were more propitious.

Meanwhile, the only intelligent course for a bright young corporal to pursue was to retire in good order and quickly.

Shrugging his shoulders he stepped aside:

"All right, my old one," he said, adopting a free and easy manner to placate the crowd. "I'm not such a bad fellow even if I do lose my temper now and then. Go ahead, Milburn. Have your drink, and as for the girl," he laughed, "if there *is* a girl, kiss her for me. You'll have to introduce me one of these days."

"Don't trust that snake," interjected Mireille, her hat sliding down over one eye as she tried to squeeze past two large Legionnaires who barred her way with immovable elbows.

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"Let me at him. Accused me of stealing two hundred and fifty francs, he did! I'll scratch his eyes out."

"He's not worth bothering about," Milburn broke in. "Let him go."

But such a peaceful solution was not to the liking of some of the onlookers. As the crowd was about to break up a civilian, who had been standing behind Toxandre, thrust out an arm and gave him a quick shove between the shoulder blades. Toxandre lurched forward, fell against Milburn, and let out a mighty howl as the business end of the cigarette Milburn was smoking burned the flesh of his cheek bone.

A Legionnaire swung at the civilian, knocked him cold, and was set upon by two other civilians who kicked him in the stomach and rolled with him into the gutter. In a split second hell broke loose.

From sidewalk to sidewalk furious battle flared up as the scum of Sidi-bel-Abbes, both male and female, tore into the Legionnaires with hat pins, knives and brass knuckles. Bayonets leaped from their scabbards. Arab bootblacks danced about on the outskirts of the throng encouraging the combatants with cries of childish delight, while Lugnatti, on the doorstep of his newly painted café bellowed for the police, the *gendarmes,* the town patrol, and his patron saint.

Toxandre, frantic with fear and pain, convinced that his eye was burned beyond repair, clung to Milburn, biting, clawing, kicking, until a stinging wallop under the chin steadied him him down.

"You'll pay for this," he yelled. "You'll be court-martialed!"

"Dee-lighted!" shouted Milburn, who was far from being either calm, cool, or phlegmatic. "Cheap at half the price. Dirt cheap!"

HE drove a long left against the bridge of the corporal's well moulded nose, and was about to follow it up with a roundhouse right when out of the mob burst Mireille and a brace of boy friends, weedy, seedy, gutter-rats in soiled work clothes of blue denim. A knife flashed in the lamp light.

"That's him," screamed Mireille. "Cut out his black heart!"

"Help!" squawked Toxandre as the point of the blade ripped open the sleeve of his tunic from elbow to wrist and cut a thin red groove in his arm. "Help!"

That hay-making right Milburn had intended for Toxandre caught one of the gutter-rats on the nape of the neck. He went down and he stayed down. Toxandre was too badly shaken to protect himself.

Milburn slung him against the wall of the café and stood over him when he crumpled up.

Mireille, dear, dainty, little woman that she was, hurled an empty bottle at Milburn. It missed his head by inches, struck the brick wall, and burst, showering him with jagged fragments of glass.

He ducked, and as he did so the second apache stabbed him in the shoulder.

Blood poured from the wound, drenching his shirt front.

His left arm hung numb and useless at his side.

With difficulty he drew his bayonet from its scabbard and peered from side to side, hunting for his assailant. A mist was gathering before his eyes and a muffled silence seemed to weigh down upon the street.

All at once a *gendarme* hove in sight, a big fellow with a booming voice.

"*Tu l'as pas volé!* Serves you right,

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you scoundrel. You're under arrest . . . you're under arrest . . ."

The voice grew louder and louder. It rolled and echoed inside Milburn's head, and the *gendarme's* face became a white and shining blob, so intolerably bright that he dropped his bayonet and raised his hand to shield his eyes. Then, without transition, he found himself lying on a hospital cot, and the sun, slanting through an iron-barred window, shone full in his face.

An orderly standing at his side, was saying:

"That's true, you're under arrest, but you're not doing yourself any good yelling your head off. Take it easy. You're not the first Legionnaire who's ever been sent to prison. And what's more you won't be the last. So why worry? To my way of thinking a man's not what I'd call a real soldier until he's spent a few months cracking stones."

"Prison?" echoed Milburn. He was very weak. Sweat poured down his cheeks when he tried to move.

The orderly wiped the scum off his lips.

"It's nothing to make a fuss about. You're lucky to be alive. We had you all set to move to the mortuary about nine times. Don't talk too much. That lung of yours is still in bad shape, but your temperature is coming down. You'll pull through if you give yourself a chance."

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAVELING IN HANDCUFFS.

MILBURN pulled through. The wound in his shoulder healed, his strength returned as the hot and empty days slipped by. With the exception of the medical officer and the orderlies no one called on him, he was cut off from all contact with the outside world: he was a prisoner under close arrest awaiting court-martial.

The doctor treated him as if he were a guinea pig. He never unbent, never spoke a single word that was not absolutely necessary to the efficient care of the patient in strict accordance with the instructions embalmed in that encyclopedic compilation, the *Code Militaire*.

He cured Milburn's body, but in so doing poisoned his mind, filling him with bitter contempt for everything and everybody connected with the Legion.

At the time when Milburn had been carted into the prison infirmary it would have been hard to find a more easy-going and tolerant human being. Long before he was able to crawl out of bed and face a general court-martial every last vestige of good humor and tolerance had been blotted out of his soul.

The orderlies, as his strength returned, treated him with callous indifference. They snickered and looked wise when he tried to find out what charges were to be brought against him. Technically, he was in solitary confinement and they were under orders not to talk.

"You're a tough customer," one of them volunteered. "That's an established fact, and I'm not going to get tangled up in something that does not concern me. I've got a good job, I'm going to stick to it. You know why you're here. What's the use of pretending to be so dumb?"

So he was left in ignorance of his fate until late in August when he was discharged from the infirmary and placed in a cell. Then things began to happen. An officer, a lieutenant with

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a long, schoolmasterish face and a gold-rimmed pince-nez astride a thin nose, marched into the cell with the information that he had been appointed to defend the culprit at the court-martial which was to convene the next day.

"I am," he stated, fingering his glasses with a quick, nervous gesture, "in a great hurry. A very great hurry. I shall do my best for you. My very best. We need not expect to convince the court of your innocence. We must focus our defense upon the extenuating circumstances, if any."

"So I'm guilty, am I?" commented Milburn. "That's splendid. I'm glad that's settled."

"Your sarcasm is out of place," the schoolmasterish lieutenant snapped. "And uncalled for. It is quite evident from the documents in the *dossier* that you tried to stab Corporal Toxandre."

"I tried to do what?" Milburn was so weak and startled that he sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Stand up when an officer is speaking to you!" bellowed the turnkey who was assisting at the interview. "On your feet, *salopard!*"

"Don't waste my time," complained the officer after Milburn had assumed a more decorous attitude. "I told you I was in a great hurry. You are charged, (a) with behaving in a riotous manner in a public place, (b) with refusing to obey an order, (c) with assault and battery with intent to kill upon the person of Corporal Toxandre. Of course, we could plead drunkenness."

"We'll do nothing of the sort," said Milburn. "I was not drunk. I did not attack Toxandre."

"*Corporal* Toxandre, if you please."

"Do you mean to say he has accused me of trying to stab him?"

The officer tapped a yellow folder with red tape fasteners which he carried under his arm.

"It's all here in the evidence. I've been over it very thoroughly. Very thoroughly indeed. He claims you have been jealous ever since he was promoted and that, on several occasions, you have sought to quarrel with him, especially since you were detailed for fatigue duty at the officers' club."

"There's not a word of truth in any of it. I can prove . . ."

"We shall plead drunkenness," the officer said firmly. "It is useless to attempt to refute the evidence."

"Chief Sergeant Sinigaglia will tell you . . ."

Again he was cut short. The lieutenant shuddered and blinked his eyes very fast behind the glittering lenses of his glasses, so that he looked like a prim old maid shocked by an unseemly story.

"Chief Sergeant Sinigaglia does not enter into this case. He has nothing to do with your conduct. His name appears nowhere in the evidence."

MILBURN drew a deep breath before he said:

"If you don't want to hear my side of the case, why don't you say so?"

"Haven't I been listening to you for the past half hour?" the officer cried indignantly. "We are getting nowhere. We must conform to the laws of evidence and judicial procedure. I shall plead drunkenness. You have not been in the Legion very long . . ."

"Too long to suit my taste."

The officer was kind enough to overlook this interruption.

". . . and I think I can get you off with a light sentence if you leave the

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conduct of the case to me and keep a civil tongue in your head. That will be all. I'll see you tomorrow in court. As I said, I am in a great hurry."

The door slammed. The key turned in the lock. Two minutes later, however, the door swung open again and the guard reappeared. He carried a length of thick rubber hose in his hand.

"So that's how you speak to your officers, is it?" he observed. "Why, you insolent hyena, they ought to give you twenty years. They ought to have you shot!"

As he spoke he caught Milburn by the throat, shoved him against the wall, and pounded his ribs and thighs with the improvised blackjack.

"You'll get more of this where you're going," he panted as Milburn sank to his knees. "They'll cure you up there. You'll be meat and drink to the prison staff. They're going to love you! When they're through with you, you'll creep on all fours and kiss their boots, and you'll be respectful when an officer speaks to you."

Milburn cleared his throat.

"Is that how good Legionnaires are made?" he croaked. "I always wondered."

A blow on the side of the head put an end to his hostile behavior, and the vermin feasted undisturbed upon his hide until at suppertime the guard slung a pailful of water in his face.

At nine the next morning he appeared before his judges. There were seven of them, sitting all in a row behind a long table on a dais. Seven men in medalled uniforms, sworn to apply the Law without fear or favor. The veiled light sifting through dirty window panes accentuated the bony structure of their faces and filled their eye sockets with shadow so that they looked like seven empty skulls.

Grim, stiff, bored, they sat at the table drawing squiggles on their blotting pads; and a plaster cast of Marianne, that ample bosomed totemic emblem of the Third French Republic, looked down uopn their labors with a complacent smile.

MILBURN'S case was unimportant. The court dealt with it between two smothered yawns. A clerk droned through the indictment. Corporal Toxandre appeared at the witness bar and restated his evidence.

He appeared ill at ease and did not glance in Milburn's direction. The prosecutor fulminated for a minute or two, thumping his breast as he urged the court to make an example of this insubordinate and criminal-minded soldier.

When the prosecutor subsided the schoolmasterish lieutenant spoke his little piece in a whining, nasal voice. The president of the court questioned the accused. Had he anything to say?

Milburn was brief.

"Corporal Toxandre's charges," he said, "are false, from beginning to end—false."

A frown barred the president's forehead. He spoke with ominous calm. "Is that all you have to say?"

"Tell the president you regret your act," prompted the lieutenant in a loud aside. "Throw yourself upon the mercy of the court."

"I will do nothing of the sort," said Milburn and his voice rang in the stillness. "Toxandre is a blackguard and a liar. The one thing I do most bitterly regret is that I saved Toxandre's life. If this is your idea of justice . . . if I am to be muzzled . . ."

"Order!" brayed a clerk. "Order!"

"The court will adjourn," the president added quickly.

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And that was that. Milburn went back to his cell between four armed guards.

"You'll catch hell for this," one trooper whispered out of the corner of his mouth. "Too bad you didn't keep your trap shut."

"I don't give a damn," retorted Milburn who was still at white heat. "I'm through with the Legion."

But the Legion was not through with him. Without a dissenting voice the court found Legionnaire Milburn guilty and condemned him to two years at hard labor. Luckily for the prisoner, the judge advocate general, when he reviewed the case, pared the sentence down to six months, not because the culprit deserved any clemency but solely because he was English.

All the Anglo-Saxons, whether they came from England or America, or Australia, were a nuisance and a source of endless trouble. They thought for themselves. They argued. They quibbled about their rights.

Discipline was foreign to their nature. They looked upon the Legion as a lark, as a huge, hilarious joke. No matter how carefully they were trained their most detestable faults could never be eradicated. Outwardly, they might conform to the accepted pattern; when the occasion arose they died with commendable courage; but at heart they were forever tourists amused by the novelty of their surroundings, craving excitement, unwilling to put up with any needless inconveniences.

Officers and non-commissioned officers meant no more to them than gold-braided guides, who had to be followed but whose appearance and mannerisms were open to the most scathing criticism.

And if on their conducted tour through the Legion they ran afoul of the law and were punished as they deserved to be punished, they became indignant and highly vocal. If they survived and returned to their homelands they gave out interviews to the press, they wrote articles and books full of gall and venom and lies and anti-French propaganda.

So the judge advocate general, having weighed all these facts, sighed and shook his head and wished to the *bon Dieu* a law could be enacted to keep all Anglo-Saxons out of the Legion, and he reduced Milburn's sentence from two years to six months . . .

AND at four o'clock in the morning the turnkey yanked Milburn from his cell and bundled him out to join a batch of fourteen convicts which was being handed over to the personal care of a squad of *gendarmes*, who knew nothing about the complexities of international relations and cared even less.

To them a prisoner was a creature without rights or privileges, a scoundrel who had to be bullied, kicked, and cuffed into submission if he dared to breathe out of turn.

Their methods came as a revelation to Milburn even though he thought he was beginning to know something about the underside of military life. He was still half asleep as he stumbled out into the courtyard where the jailbirds were drawn up in the darkness outside the orderly room. A lantern was thrust in his face, blinding him, and a rasping voice barked:

"Step out, you lump of putrescence! Move!"

A hand grabbed him by the neck and threw him forward. He went sprawling for he was still weak and shaky, and the canvas kitbag he carried on his shoulder weighed a ton.

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"Another one of those tumbling acrobats," commented the *gendarme*. "That's very pretty but we can't waste time watching. On your feet!"

He accompanied the order with a kick in the pit of the stomach, then he caught Milburn by the collar of his tunic and jerked him off the ground.

"You'll do what you're told," he announced. "When I give an order you're going to obey instantly even if you're dead and already stinking. Pick up that kitbag and fall in, and don't let me hear another word out of you."

Milburn did not say a word. Instead of picking up his bag, however, he did his best to punch the *gendarme's* jaw. He was past caring what happened to him if only he could have the exquisite satisfaction of slamming one of his tormentors.

His attempt ended in failure. Some one grabbed his arms and twisted them up behind his back.

"You want to watch him," the turnkey told the *Brigadier de Gendarmerie*. "He's English, and I don't mind telling you he's bad. He tried to murder his corporal."

"They're all savages, the English," commented the brigadier. "I never did like them. They burned Joan of Arc. You can't forgive a thing like that. Stick out your wrists," he added, "you're traveling in handcuffs. They'll be planting a cross over your head before you're much older if you keep this up."

CHAPTER XIV.

TRAMPLED MUD.

DRAWN up on two ranks the convicts stood outside the tent of the camp commandant, Adjutant Pollini. In the mud at their feet lay their kitbags. A drenching rain, sweeping down the valley in furious gusts, beat upon their rounded backs. Stupid with fatigue, unbelievably dirty and ragged after a week's journey, they stood motionless, staring at the tent where for the past half hour the convoy leader, Brigadier Chérange, had been in conference with Pollini.

It had been a nightmare journey. For three days, even since they had left railhead, the rain had fallen without cease. Cold, wet, hungry, dithering with fever, they had crawled into the gaunt hills above Taza, following dirt roads ankle deep in mud, fording torrents, sleeping at night in barbed wire pens where they were herded like cattle.

For food they had eaten stinking goat's meat and soggy bread green with mould. Their shoes had rotted and fallen to pieces.

And if their faltering strength gave out, if they lost their footing on the steep mountain trails their escort of black Senegalese Tirailleurs were upon them in an instant, ready to hammer them senseless unless they got up and went on. . .

"It's nothing to me," Brigadier Chérange had warned them jovially at the outset. "Either you keep up with the procession or you die. Suit yourselves, my gentle doves. The guards have orders to shoot to kill. Take my word for it, there is nothing they would like better than a little practice at moving targets."

The last day had been the worst of all.

One prisoner had lost his footing as he struggled across a swollen stream. The current had washed him against some boulders and as he clawed at their smooth surface, Chérange, who was anxious to reach the penal camp

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before dark, had brayed at the Senegalese:

"Can't you see he is trying to escape? Shoot him before he gets away. Fire!"

The first volley had chipped fragments of stone off the boulders without touching the prisoner. He had half-turned and shouted at the men on the bank, but the wind and the rain and the roar of the foaming stream had covered the sound of his voice.

He had raised one arm as if to beg for mercy. Their bullets had struck home, and he had slipped down into the swift rushing water, and the rain had washed the red smears off the glistening gray rocks.

The convoy had reached Camp 11 at the head of the Bou-Hamadi Pass at four o'clock sharp, in accordance with its marching schedule.

Inside the tent Adjutant Pollini, a tall, scrawny man with a small head perched on a long, thin neck, was congratulating Brigadier Chérange on his accomplishment.

"That's what I like," he was saying. "Punctuality. That's the essence of the military spirit. Have another drink."

They were fairly well lit, both of them. Their faces were flushed and, when they awoke, they had great difficulty articulating certain words. They were on their best behavior, however, and extremely dignified as befits two non-commissioned officers occupying responsible positions. They had guzzled the contents of a bottle of fiery *eau-de-vie,* but they were as decorous as a pair of major-generals. More so, in fact. No two major-generals could have behaved so pompously over such a long period of time.

"You need it," added Pollini. "To take the chill out of your bones, Brigadier. This is a bad season. Fever is an ever present menace, and dysentery, not to mention pneumonia brought on by exposure."

The brigadier brushed his heavy mustache out of his mouth before carrying his glass to his lips.

"Far be it from me to disregard the wishes of my superior officer," he simpered. "Superior officer says 'have another drop.' Hic! Forgive me, Adjutant, I beg of you! I am in duty bound to partake of another drop. That's true discipline. And as for dysentery, my wife, dear woman, always makes me wear a flannel belt. There's nothing like red flannel during the rainy season."

THEY discussed remedies and wives for a while, then, the bottle having been emptied, Pollini picked up the sheaf of documents lying on the table.

"So you lost one man," he commented. "You'll make out your report, of course. Shot while trying to escape. They never seem to learn, do they? How about the others? Any peculiarities worth mentioning?"

Chérange shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing sensational—with one . . . hic! . . . exception. An English Legionnaire, name of Milburn. He tried to assassinate his corporal. Don't trust him, whatever you do. I had him in handcuffs all the way. He's as tricky as they make 'em."

Pollini's loose lipped mouth split into a humorless smile.

"Perfidious Albion, eh?" he whined. "It's in their blood as you might say."

"That's it. This Milburn, he's quiet enough. He just plods along, but all the time he's sizing you up. You can feel it. It's in his eyes. He looks

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through you, as if you were some species of a monkey on a stick."

"He's not going to look at me that way," promised Pollini, getting up and hooking a rubber cape around his shoulders. "We don't mollycoddle them up here as you may have heard."

Chérange nodded. Even among *gendarmes,* a breed not over-burdened with kindly sentiments, Penal Camp 11 had a bad reputation. Short-term prisoners were sent there from the central penitentiary.

Adjutant Pollini broke them of their evil ways in no time at all. He didn't give them a chance to bat an eyelash. From the moment they came under his control until they were released he made their lives so intolerably foul that few of them, thereafter, ever allowed themselves to be condemned for minor offenses. A state of affairs which delighted Adjutant Pollini and flattered his vanity.

Followed by Chérange he stepped out of the tent into the rain. A black corporal opened his mouth and emitted a tremendous shout: "Attention!"

The prisoners straightened their aching backs, braced their trembling legs, but they did not move fast enough to suit Pollini. At once he was in a towering rage. Saliva bubbled out of his mouth as he snarled:

"Cattle! From now on you'll leap out of your hides when you're given an order. Attention! As you were! Attention!"

A man began to cough.

"Stop that!" stormed Pollini. "Be still!"

But the trooper could not stop. The spasm racked his whole body. His lips turned blue.

"He's been doing that since we left railhead," explained Chérange. "He says he has bronchitis."

"Does he?" jeered Pollini. "So he's diagnosed his own complaint! Isn't that nice of him. I'll write the prescription. Three days on half rations for having coughed on parade. Now let's have a look at the rest of your crew. Where's your friend Milburn? It's this thing, is it?"

He thrust his livid, twitching face within an inch of Milburn's nose: "So you're the *sale Anglais* who has been causing all the trouble, are you?"

Milburn stood motionless. His mouth was set in a thin hard line.

"Answer me," shrieked Pollini. "I asked you a question. Three days on half rations for failing to answer when asked a direct question."

"I am Legionnaire Milburn. My nationality has nothing to do with . . ."

POLLINI suffocated. "How dare you argue with me! You—a Legionnaire? You're wrong! You're a convict. I never heard of an Englishman yet who could be made into a Legionnaire. It takes courage to be a Legionnaire. It takes what you haven't got, and never have had."

He spent the next few minutes heaping upon Milburn all the insulting remarks he could call to mind. Fashoda, the Napoleonic wars, the Boer war, the last war, the treaty of Versailles all became glaring instances of England's duplicity and moral turpitude. But he ran out of breath and out of adjectives long before he was able to shake Milburn's self-control.

"That's what I think of you," he summed up, "and every word of it is true, isn't that so?"

Milburn eyes never wavered as he replied:

"What you believe or do not believe does not concern me in the least."

"You refuse to answer?"

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"Your question requires no answer."

It was the very opening Pollini had been waiting for. Shouting incoherently about "flagrant insubordination" he whipped his revolver from its holster and drove the muzzle with all his might against Milburn's ribs.

Milburn was too weary to offer the slightest resistance. He swayed unsteadily. Pollini clouted him viciously on the jaw, sent him sprawling on top of his kitbag.

"And that's lesson number one," trumpeted Pollini. "Never disagree with me, do you hear, you hyena? Never!" He turned to the Senegalese corporal, "Lock him up with the incorrigibles in Tent 10."

Tent 10 was one of the adjutant's outstanding contributions to the science of penology. It was the fruit of many years of experimentation and research as to the easiest and cheapest method of making the lives of other human beings unendurable. The tent, designed to accommodate eight men, never harbored less than sixteen or twenty. They were shackled by short ankle chains to the center pole so that they were forced to lie as close together as sardines in a tin can. To heighten the illusion the tent flap was always kept tight shut from five o'clock in the afternoon until five in the morning when the incorrigibles were herded out to go to work. Nothing compelled the prisoners to breathe the tainted air. They were free to die. Many did. Furthermore, there were no floor boards. The convicts slept in trampled mud so foul that a hog wallow by contrast would have seemed a bed of roses.

Milburn had smelled many smells since he had been in Africa, but nothing half as dreadful had ever assailed his nostrils as the odor that caught at his throat when the corporal shoved him into Tent 10. Bestial faces with ragged beards and matted hair peered at him out of the shadows.

A man cried out:

"What's the idea? Aren't we smothering fast enough to suit you, you black baboon?"

CONTEMPTUOUSLY, not bothering to look where he planted his big feet, the corporal strode into the tent, kicking the prisoners aside if they did not squirm out of his way fast enough.

"*Toi couchez!*" he ordered. "Lie down!"

He didn't wait for Milburn to obey. He flung him down and snapped a steel band on his ankle.

The tent flap closed. Rain drummed on the leaking canvas. The man lying next to Milburn snarled:

"This isn't the Ritz. You're taking up too much room! Roll over on your side and get out of my way."

His French was abominable. The tone of his voice more than the meaning of his words roused Milburn from his torpor. It bit like acid through the layers of pain and fatigue that deadened his senses. A feeling of elation swept over him. Clumsily he propped himself up on one elbow and stared through the yellow dusk at his neighbor.

"God bless my soul!" he ejaculated. "West!"

Blank astonishment crept into the man's red-rimmed, feverish eyes. Then all at once his mouth gaped open.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said in a whisper. "If it ain't Milburn." His face became contorted with fury. "So they got you, too, did they, you double-crossing skunk? You're going to get yours—right now!"

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"What the devil are you talking about?" protested Milburn, striking aside the muddy hand clawing for a hold on his throat.

An angry shout went up as they squirmed in the mud.

The man behind West sharply dug an elbow into the small of his back, snarling:

"Stop that, will you? You know the rules—no fighting in here. If you got a grudge to settle, settle it in the quarry."

West subsided. Gritting his teeth he said:

"All right, Milburn. These guys don't want to spend the night locked up with a corpse. That's okay by me. But I'm giving you fair warning. In the morning you're going for a buggy ride."

"Maybe I am," conceded Milburn, "but would you mind telling me why I am to go for a buggy ride?"

"Quit stalling. Toxandre put me wise. After I'd been sentenced he came down to see me. He said you went straight to the sergeant and warned him I was going to desert. He promised . . ."

Milburn stifled a maniac impulse to burst into wild guffaws.

"I don't care what Toxandre said or promised," he broke in. "He lied to you."

"Yeah? Why, you dirty crook, I wouldn't believe you on a bet."

"But you're going to. You've got to. Will you listen to me for five minutes? Will you let me tell you my side of the story?"

It took him an hour to convince West that he was telling the truth.

Night had closed in, black and hot and damp, full of the noise of the wind driven rain sweeping down the valley. Face to face they lay in the mud, their heads resting on their wet kitbags.

"Now you know as much as I do," summed Milburn. "Neither of us appears to have had much common sense."

West choked in the darkness.

"I wish I were dead. If only Connie hadn't come back! If only she'd gone home . . ."

"She can take care of herself," said Milburn with far more optimism than he actually felt.

"But she can't hang around in a dump like Sidi-bel-Abbes!" West said angrily. "She can't, I tell you. It's driving me bughouse." Abruptly he cracked up. "What's the use of going on! I'm licked. I'll never see her again . . . never get out of this damn army."

Groping through the pitch black shadows Milburn laid a hand on his arm.

"You haven't begun to fight. We're going to see this thing through. Together, we can. Next Spring, by Jove, I'll be in Hollywood and nothing is going to stop me. You have an even better reason for wanting to get out, and that's your wife."

He fumbled about until he found his canteen half full of muddy water. "Remember that toast we drank at the *Rendez-Vous* the night we met Toxandre?"

"No. Wait a minute . . . you mean —to freedom?"

"I mean to freedom," agreed Milburn. "We'll drink it again, and this time, old top, it means something."

"Freedom," he added, holding up the bottle. "Yours and mine . . . After you, my dear Alphonse. Here it is."

"Freedom!" repeated West.

The rain drummed on the canvas.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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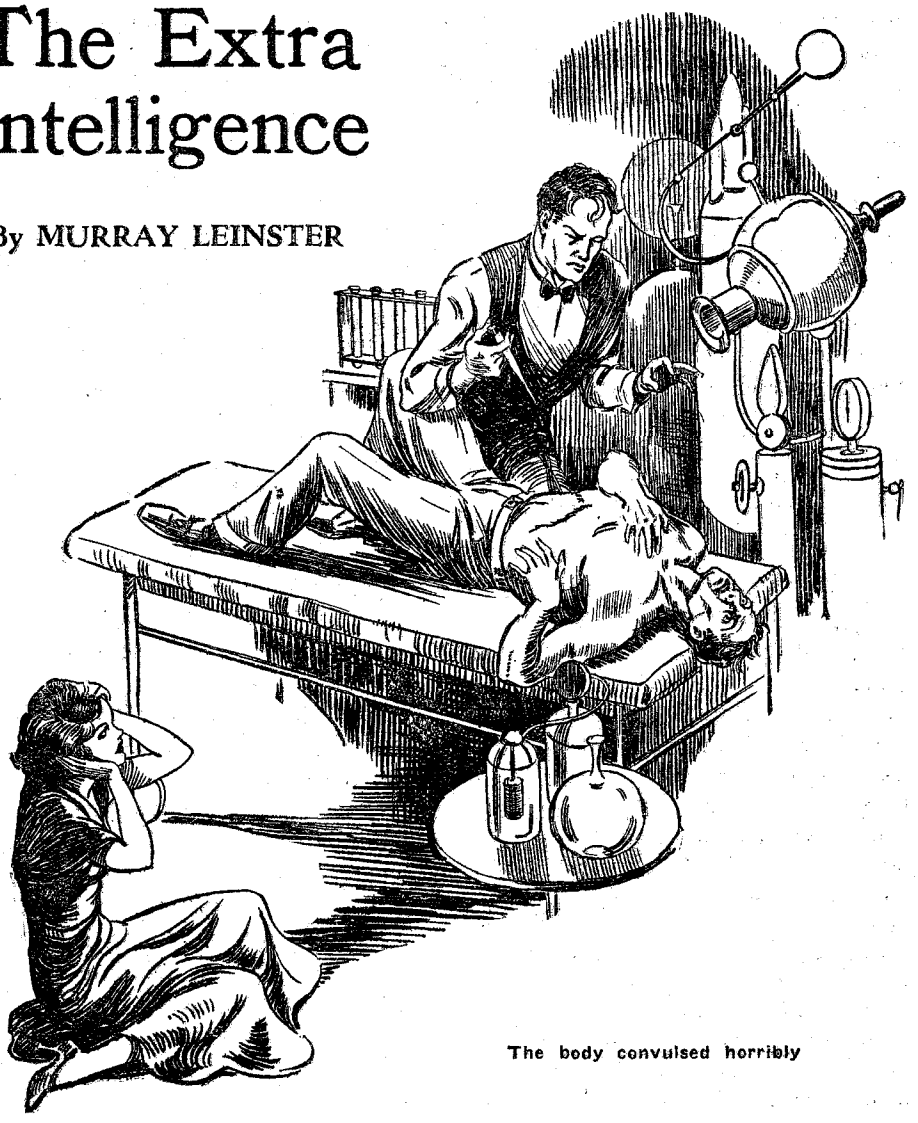
The Extra Intelligence

By MURRAY LEINSTER



The body convulsed horribly

If the lone woman of those deadly experiments had confided in Jimmy Cottrell, grave danger might have been averted—but she didn't

THE laboratory was very still. Jimmy Cottrell watched his tubes warm up and was ready. Dorothy Mears had her notebook at hand. Kreynborg gently withdrew the needle, pushed aside the anæsthesia-cone, and began the skillful, gentle massage which was the preliminary to the action of the injected drug. The dog lay still. Kreynborg was a tender-hearted soul, and he had not strapped the animal to the table. Before anæsthetizing it, he had given it a hypnotic drug so that it was sleeping soundly when the chloroform-cone went over it. The dog had not even been frightened.

Kreynborg massaged, gently and skillfully. Epinephrine, injected into one of the larger veins. He was working it along

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that vein to the heart. The dog was dead. It had been dead for fifteen minutes. But the epinephrine caused a spasmodic contraction of the blood-vessels, forcing blood into the heart. And a heart, even a human heart, will beat rhythmically of its own self-excitation if it is once stimulated to an initial beat. The drug and the massage served to provide that initial stimulus—sometimes.

Jimmy moved the receptor-unit of his meters close to the motionless dog's frontal-bone. Dorothy waited, pencil ready.

"No indication," said Jimmy. "No indication . . . No indication . . ."

"Wait, Jimmy," said Kreynborg gently. "It takes minutes. But he was dead, eh?"

"He is dead," said Jimmy, his eyes upon the meters. "Not a flicker of consciousness. Not even a stray reflex. Not even—" He stopped. "A reflex then."

"Yes," said Kreynborg, "but it was a similar reflex that led to the invention of the galvanic battery. He is dead, Jimmy."

He worked on, patiently. There had been much publicity concerning Kreynborg's success in reviving dead small animals. He was working toward a technic by which, ultimately, surgical operations now impossible could be performed with safety. The pulmotor and the oxygen-carbon-dioxide tent were long strides forward. Kreynborg thought he could go farther—and he had.

But there had been some very peculiar results in certain of his experiments, and he had called in Jimmy Cottrell to help him interpret them.

"Some day," said Jimmy, watching, "I'll get my meters down to the registration of somatic life. The cells in this dog's body are still alive. His fur and nails and bones would grow for days at least. As an aggregation of cells he's living, or you couldn't hope to bring him back. It's the unifying factor, the ego, that's dead."

"Yes," said Kreynborg, his strong, supple hands still working gently. "And it is that ego, Jimmy, which your meter detects and that ego which I do not understand."

Dorothy, pencil poised for experimental notes, said abruptly:

"I still think this is wrong. Perhaps I am superstitious. But I have a feeling that we are meddling with something dangerous."

"I don't see it," said Jimmy. "If Carl, here, can work out a technic by which a patient who dies on the operating table can be revived instead of staying dead—"

"It isn't that, Jimmy," protested Dorothy. "That's—reasonable. If it's done before the—" she hesitated, and said dubiously, "before the breath leaves the body. The heart stopping doesn't count, but there's something else. When somebody's really dead—"

"She speaks of the soul," said Kreynborg mildly. "The ego. Perhaps they are one. I think your meters should begin to read now, Jimmy. And remember, you took readings on this dog before I chloroformed it and as it died. I wish you to compare the readings as it is revived. If you do not see something very strange—"

"Meter kicking over now!" said Jimmy sharply. "Quiet, now!"

The meters were kicking over. First a slow, deliberate, straining heave of the sensory meter. That was recording the electric currents accompanying the nerve-message to the brain that the heart was straining to make its beat. It did beat. It hesitated for a long time. The needle quivered again. It beat once more. Then again and again.

There were sudden l i t t l e flickerings superimposed upon the main rhythm even as that rhythm struggled to establish itself. The consciousness-meter remained blank. Jimmy himself had devised this apparatus which detected, not consciousness itself, but the obscure electric phenomena which accompany consciousness. He'd tested his device in a hundred ways, from the strong and definite registrations of a human brain—which were stronger as the brain was more intelligent—down to the infinitely feeble and very curious phenomena accompanying a sensitive plant's reaction to a touch or injury. There was a primitive

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form of ego even in the plant, and Jimmy's apparatus measured it.

NOW, the consciousness-meter showed nothing. The sensory-meters wavered feebly. The sensory nerves were sending messages to a brain which paid no heed to them. Then queer little jerks of the volition-needle. Nerve-ganglia, these, speeding up the heart-beat, adjusting blood-vessels to temperature-differences, and so on.

"The body's beginning to function," said Jimmy briefly. "Nothing from the brain yet."

"Sometimes we fail. Sometimes—"

Then the consciousness-needle jerked. It jerked again. It was still. It quivered, and ceased, and quivered again. To Jimmy there came a very curious feeling that it was like nibbles on a fishing-line. Then there was a sudden, violent fluctuation, and then a smooth climb of the intensity-of-consciousness register.

It began at five units on Jimmy's arbitrary scale. A dog's normal intensity-of-consciousness was seven. Even at the lower intensity, though, the normal quiverings of the needle were queer. A human being's consciousness-intensity line goes up and down very nearly nine times a second. A dog's line wavers four. Lower animals drop progressively and the sensitive plant has what may be termed a pulsation of consciousness no more often than once in four minutes and a quarter.

The needle here, though, moved faster. Instead of four pulsations per second, for a dog's intelligence, the meter quivered at least twelve times.

"Something now!" said Jimmy tensely. He watched. The intensity went up to six units. To seven. To nine. Twelve—fifteen—twenty! It hung there an instant. The speed of the pulsations increased. From twelve per second they were at least sixteen. The intensity wavered and leaped up again. Twenty-five. Thirty. Thirty-two! And the needle quivered so rapidly that it became a fuzzy dark line.

"Good Lord!" said Jimmy, staring. "The thing's—the thing's thinking faster than a man! Ten times as fast! And the intensity is away above human! Good Lord, man! This isn't possible! It—it—"

The dog on the table stirred. It breathed deeply. It moved one paw—two. Kreynborg stepped back. Dorothy watched, her lower lip caught between her teeth. She had turned pale.

The dog staggered to its feet. It looked about the laboratory. Then it turned its head and regarded its own body with a peculiar curiosity. It lifted a paw and inspected it carefully.

"It's—thinking!" gasped Dorothy.

"The intensity," said Jimmy crisply, "is thirty-seven units!"

The dog turned its head and looked at Jimmy. There was something horribly un-dog-like about the way it acted. There was something utterly intelligent about its eyes. It inspected Jimmy purposefully. Again it looked about the laboratory. And its eyes fixed upon the chemical and biological apparatus in view. It regarded that apparatus with an utterly incredible interest, an intelligent, a comprehending interest!

"This," said Kreynborg mildly, "is a sample of what I do not understand. The ego is of a higher order than a dog should have."

"It's uncanny," said Dorothy, fascinated. "It's—terrible!"

The dog gathered itself together. It jumped lightly down to the floor. It moved toward the chemical apparatus. Kreynborg put dog biscuits down upon the floor. The dog ignored them. It regarded the apparatus more closely. It stood up on its hind legs and reached out a paw.

Then, quite suddenly, it yelped. The sound was utterly dog-like. But it was a yelp of terror, of anguish, of unbearable grief. It howled, and there was grief and a queer suggestion of a bitter disappointment and a horrible rage in it. Then it shook convulsively and fell to the floor.

It lay there, breathing heavily. For half a minute or more the three in the labora-

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tory stared at it. Then Kreynborg picked it up.

"Read its consciousness now, Jimmy," he said mildly. "This has nearly happened before. And I do not understand."

JIMMY'S hands were shaking. He put the receptor on the dog's frontal bone. He looked at the consciousness-meter. Its needle wavered slowly, irregularly. And the intensity was two units.

"It's body is alive," said Jimmy unsteadily. "It's brain is—gone. In human beings, that irregular pulsation means an idiot."

"Yes," said Kreynborg regretfully. "The dog is now an idiot. It will live, and it will eat, and breathe, and drink. But it will never remember anything it had learned, and it will never learn anything. It will be only a living machine. But I have a feeling, Jimmy, that for a time it had intelligence greater than normal."

"Greater than normal?" said Jimmy harshly. "Why, man! It had four times the intelligence of a man! It had intelligence beside which you and I are as children! It simply burned out its brain!"

"So I have suspected," said Kreynborg gently. "I like dogs. But this is important. It makes my original purpose look small."

Dorothy said suddenly: "Carl, I—I noticed something. You've got to stop these experiments. Really, Carl! I noticed something—terrifying!"

But Kreynborg merely blinked at her through his spectacles.

"I wonder," he said meditatively, "how intelligent it would have been had it not been for the hypnotic drug I gave it. More intelligent still, Jimmy? We must find out!"

Outside the laboratory building, Jimmy Cottrell put Dorothy into his car and went around to the driver's seat. He stepped on the starter and put the car in gear. Dorothy glanced sidewise at him, but Jimmy remained sunk in a brown study. He drove one block—two—three without a word. He turned aside and drove between the rows of trees on the boulevard toward Dorothy's home.

"Jimmy," she said quietly, "what do you think really happened?"

"Whatever it was," said Jimmy, frowning, "the results of today, though, are simply — well — impossible! Thirty-seven units!"

"I wonder if it's impossible," said Dorothy cryptically. "You talked about rates of pulsation and intensity of consciousness. Just what relationship have those two things to brains—physical brains, I mean?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy. "Nobody does. It's been known for a long time that electric currents accompany all nerve-action. But it's only a couple of years ago that I proved that thought produced electrical phenomena too and started measuring them."

"I remember the excitement that caused!" said Dorothy. "You talk as if it weren't important, but I know, Jimmy. But these pulsations—"

"Think of the movies," said Jimmy. "The image on the screen seems continuous, but actually it's sixteen pulsations of light in every second. Well, human beings seem to be conscious continuously, but actually we have nine consciousness-pulsations per second. Nine times in every second we're really awake and aware. We don't realize the gaps in our consciousness any more than we recognize the gaps in the flow of light to the movie screen. Now, it happens that a dog has only four pulsations of consciousness a second. His consciousness is slower, and his thoughts haven't the same intensity—"

DOROTHY nodded abstractedly, as if getting to her point.

"The intensity—"

"Is like the candle-power behind the images on the movie screen," said Jimmy. "A well-illuminated picture shows more detail. A man's thoughts have extra candle-power, he thinks them faster—and there's a persistence of thought as well as a persistence of visual images. So a man —because of that persistence—can blend

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several thoughts into one, just as his eyes blend several screened pictures into one. On the screen, the result is movement. In a man's brain, it's reason. A dog's brain pulsates so slowly it can't blend thoughts, and so can't reason."

Then Dorothy said: "But your meters showed that the dog was four times as intelligent as a man."

Jimmy squirmed.

"In theory, he was. He'd an intensity of thirty-seven units. The candle-power of his thoughts was terrific. And his consciousness-pulsation was at a rate I'd simply have to guess at. Where we can blend two thoughts, or three, and therefore reason, through the persistence of thoughts in our brain, he should have been able to blend four—five—perhaps a dozen thoughts into one. But the physical parts of his brain simply couldn't stand it. They burned out."

"He'd have been able to do cube roots in his head?"

"He'd have been able to do anything!" said Jimmy. "What are you driving at?"

Dorothy ignored the query.

"I go back to my first question," she said coolly. "What is the relationship between intelligence and the physical substance known as brains?"

"I don't know," admitted Jimmy. "Nobody does."

"I think I do," said Dorothy. "There isn't any—any more than the relationship between an automobile and the man who drives it."

Jimmy swung his car around a corner.

"I had it in my mind to ask you to go swimming," he observed. "Can we drop this technical discussion long enough to settle that problem?"

"Surely. I'll go. But, Jimmy—"

"What?"

"Did you ever hear of a man driving a car so fast it smashed up?"

"Surely."

"Did you ever hear of a man having an accident with a new car just because he wasn't used to it?"

"Naturally!"

"Suppose there was an—an extra intelligence, say, that got a new brain. And it needed a brain that could run at forty or fifty or sixty pulsations a second, and at an intensity of thirty-seven of your units, and—the brain it got was built to run at four pulsations and an intensity of seven?"

Jimmy braked the car and turned into the curb. He stopped before Dorothy's home. This was a very quiet, residential street. Some children were playing a little distance off, and they played very quietly. There was a soft breeze blowing, and it rustled the leaves overhead. Dorothy looked anxiously at Jimmy.

"Do you see what I mean, Jimmy? Don't you think Carl ought to stop these experiments? At once?"

Jimmy frowned unhappily.

"It's plausible enough," he admitted. "It fits into what happened. But, Dorothy! The—extra intelligence, if there was one—where did it come from? There's no evidence, and there's never been any evidence, that intelligence could exist without some sort of body! You're suggesting that this—extra intelligence climbed into a dog's brain that had been vacated by the dog, but was going to be revived. Presumably, it didn't have to vacate any brain or body of its own. We know of none, anyhow. Really, you're talking about a disembodied spirit! And four times the intelligence of a man—" He stopped, and then said explosively, "It's nonsense!"

DOROTHY got out of the car.

"I'll be ready to go swimming in half an hour," she said quietly. "But, Jimmy—you saw that dog move over to the chemical apparatus. Why did he do that?"

"I don't know."

"What particular thing did he reach for?"

"I didn't notice."

"I did," said Dorothy. "The ethyl chloride spray. Now—if he'd smashed that, what would have happened?"

"We've have passed out," said Jimmy.

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"All of us, including the dog. But he wouldn't have done it! Confound, Dorothy! He was a dog!"

"I wonder!" said Dorothy quietly. "He had reached his paw for the ethyl chloride spray. If he'd toppled it, it would have smashed. There was just one of us who'd have gotten out of that room before being overcome. That was Carl. He'd have broken windows and let the gas out. We'd probably have been dead, or nearly, including the dog. And Carl would have tried to revive me first. He's going to ask me to marry him, Jimmy."

Jimmy Cottrell was staring, his brows contracted. His brain revolted against the implication Dorothy was making.

"Carl would have revived me first," said Dorothy. "Then he'd have worked on you. And—maybe you'd have been the first man ever to be brought back from death by Carl's process, Jimmy."

Jimmy said doggedly: "Dorothy, it's impossible!"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "So was the intelligence the dog's brain registered before it burned out. If you'd been the first man to be brought back from death, Jimmy—maybe a new intelligence, an extra intelligence would be using your brains now. They wouldn't burn out like a dog's. They're good brains, Jimmy. Maybe—maybe that was why the—extra intelligence used the dog's body to try to get them."

Jimmy's expression was a mixture of skepticism, and uneasiness, and several other things.

"Good Lord!" he said helplessly. "Dorothy, I—"

He regarded her blankly. And Dorothy smiled suddenly.

"We'll talk about it later. I'll be ready to go swimming in half an hour."

She waved her hand and went into the house.

KREYNBORG was rather pale when Jimmy went into the laboratory next morning. His long, supple hands twisted upon the arm of his chair.

"Dorothy came, and she has gone home," he said subduedly. "She talked to me, Jimmy. She is a strange girl."

"Dammit," said Jimmy ruefully, "I didn't sleep last night! She went swimming with me, and she actually had me convinced! But it's moonshine, of course."

Kreynborg spread out his hands.

"I do not know," he admitted. "I must find out."

Jimmy's lips opened. They started to frame the word "Why?" But they closed again. After all, he understood why. There was no reason for him, with the money he'd inherited, to spend his time sweating over problems involving the electrical phenomena accompanying consciousness. But some inner urge drove him on, and the same sort of urge impelled Kreynborg. Jimmy understood.

"Dorothy," said Kreynborg, "is a strange girl and a remarkable one. She is the only person who could take down my notes as an experiment proceeds, not only as I dictate them, but sometimes notes of value which I fail to dictate. She understands much. But I think she is wrong about this matter."

Jimmy sat down restlessly.

"She's gone home?" he asked.

"Yes, I know." It seemed to Jimmy that Kreynborg winced a little. "I will have no notes to dictate today. I have been thinking, Jimmy."

Jimmy fidgeted. Kreynborg did not look or talk like himself at all. He looked as if he'd had some bad news which stunned him.

"Something bothering you, Carl?" asked Jimmy awkwardly.

Kreynborg smiled at him.

"Yes, Jimmy. I will tell you presently. I do not like Dorothy's theory. I have a scientific prejudice against explanations which call in the supernatural."

"Who hasn't?" asked Jimmy.

Kreynborg nodded gravely.

"Just so. We all object, because such explanations are the refuge of the lazy-minded, and they become matters of faith instead of reason. But I think that per-

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haps, when the dog died, some changes in the brain took place. And consequently, when he was revived the dog had brain fever. Your meters would not distinguish between delirium and normal activity, would they?"

Jimmy frowned. "The pulsations would be irregular, in delirium," he said slowly. "They'd not be perfectly rhythmic. But yesterday they were so rapid I couldn't tell whether they were rhythmic or not."

"So I thought," said Kreynborg. He sat quite still save for the twisting movement of his hands. "But one could administer a drug beforehand to make impossible any case of brain fever. So I shall prepare for another experiment under slightly changed conditions."

He was silent. He seemed unnaturally abstracted. Jimmy stirred, and he came back to the moment.

"I am absent-minded," he said apologetically. "I have had a shock, Jimmy. But there is another matter. I asked you here to do measurements for me. But there is another matter where you might be of some service, aside from my research. Will you do it, Jimmy?"

"If I can. What is it?"

"The gland researchers," explained Kreynborg, "are trying to grow ductless glands outside the body, for a supply of pituitrin and such things. An extension of the work of Carrel, who kept a chicken's heart alive—how many years?"

"Plenty," said Jimmy. "Twenty or more."

"Just so. They have a pituitary gland from the brain of a dog, which lives in its nutrient solution, but seems to undergo strange changes of activity. They suspect that perhaps some nerve-fibres remain attached and affect the gland. You can tell them?"

Jimmy shrugged.

"Probably. I'll try, anyhow."

"I will get the jar," said Kreynborg. "You understand. It will require readings taken at different times, to search for nerve-currents. You might try one—say—now, if you like."

"All right. I'll try it," said Jimmy.

He sat frowning while Kreynborg went out. He didn't like the way Kreynborg was acting. It looked like a tremendous shock, and it disturbed Jimmy because he thought he might know what it was.

HE was relieved at the interruption to his own thoughts when Kreynborg came back. The culture-jar was not a very impressive bit of apparatus. Merely the jar itself, with a thermostat-controlled heating-unit, and the tubes by which the sterile nutrient solution might be changed. Kreynborg plugged in the heating-unit.

"Here you are, Jimmy."

He watched, in the same subdued fashion, as Jimmy warmed up his amplifier-tubes and adjusted the receptor-unit to the jar.

"Not much to work with," said Jimmy. "But we'll see."

He watched the meters. They read blank. Then, rather surprisingly, not the volition-meter nor the sensory-meter, but the consciousness-meter kicked over and back, and over and back and over and back. Then it was still for a time. It repeated the queer, intermittent registration. Sometimes the registration continued for half a minute.

"Something there," said Jimmy, "but it's funny. . . . Consciousness!" He cut off his tubes and thought. "The pituitary's in the brain. Perhaps some neurones were dissected out with the gland. There are two types of registration, one of three or four kick-overs of the meter, and another of an apparently indefinite number. They seem to alternate." He frowned. "I'm puzzled. You tell the gland men there's some nervous action remaining, and I'll work out a way to record it and give them a graph on it."

"Yes. It would be well to have graphic records," said Kreynborg. "Of our work, too. How long before you could have such a device, Jimmy?"

Jimmy knitted his brows.

"Hm. . . . The intensity stuff is easy.

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But the pulsation-rate isn't. We could record anything up to three or four thousand per second on a phonograph disk, though. Read off the wave-forms, too. I'll go to a sound-equipment place and see a technician. Report tomorrow, Carl. It ought to be fairly simple to fix up."

He stood up, restlessly. Kreynborg nodded.

"I will take the culture-jar back," he said subduedly. "But before you go there is something I should tell you."

"What?"

"I asked Dorothy to marry me," said Kreynborg quietly. "She refused me."

Jimmy blinked. Then: "I'm sorry, old man," he said awkwardly. "Awfully sorry."

Kreynborg smiled faintly.

"You should not be. She said she liked me very much, but she could not think of marrying me. I—I wished to have hope, Jimmy. I asked if there was someone else. And there is. I am betraying a confidence. She said that you had not asked her to marry you, but—"

Jimmy flushed crimson.

"Good Lord! Carl, I—I'm sorry! I have been hoping, but—"

"It hurts," said Kreynborg gently. "Yes. It hurts. But I still like you, Jimmy. And—it clears the way for something I had thought of doing. A scientist should be free to take risks. And now, some day in the future I shall make an experiment that I would not make if I—had hopes of marrying Dorothy."

He put out his hand. "I have betrayed her confidence," he said, smiling, "because I wished to feel that at least I had a share in bringing about her happiness. Good luck, Jimmy!"

He picked up the culture-jar and carried it carefully out of the laboratory to return it to its place.

THERE was moonlight. There was music. There were waves rolling sedately ashore and making a hollow, booming roar that was a fitting accompaniment of the sea breeze and somehow even to the dance tune. Jimmy and Dorothy strolled away from the dance-floor in the moonlight. There was a new, shining ring on Dorothy's finger, and now and again she glanced down at it. But she spoke gravely.

"I still don't like it, Jimmy. I wish we could persuade Carl—"

Jimmy said uncomfortably: "All this past week we've been checking and rechecking. And the last dog we experimented on didn't put on any queer performance."

"It was dead longer than the other," said Dorothy soberly. "Twenty-two minutes. Its brain came back simply—empty. And—Jimmy, I think Carl has made some experiments we don't know anything about. There are signs of it in the laboratory. The chloroform-bottle. And he's been using your apparatus."

"Taking readings on that pituitary gland," said Jimmy more uncomfortably still. "I told him he could.—Queer, that gland."

Dorothy shuddered. "Horrible!"

"Not necessarily," said Jimmy defensively. "You don't think it horrible to keep a gland or a chicken's heart alive in solution. Maybe some day the meat-supply for the whole world will be grown in test tubes instead of on the hoof.

"Those brain-cells attached to the pituitary gland simply happened to be memory-cells. They're no more the individual dog kept alive in a culture-jar than—than a card index in the same jar would be. There's no intelligence there. Just stored records. They happen to be auditory records, but that's all."

"They—bark," said Dorothy, and shuddered again.

Jimmy had kept his promise to Kreynborg and prepared an addition to his apparatus for recording the data the meters registered. The intensity record had been simple. And to record the pulsations had been simple, too. An audio transformer and an extra amplifier bank inscribed each pulsation on a rotating disk record.

But an extraordinary thing had turned

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up on those records. Recording the pulsations from the culture-jar, Jimmy had examined the wave-forms of the pulsations composing the groups of three and four disturbances, and then those of the long-continued series. Under the microscope, the wavering scratch on the phonograph disk looked like sound waves.

Kreynborg had suggested, humorously, that Jimmy play them. As a curiosity, Jimmy had done it. And out of the phonograph came barkings! The heavy "*Woof! Woof! Woof!*" of a big dog, and then the excited, yelping uproar of a dog much smaller. The brain-cells attached to the pituitary gland held stored-away auditory memories of the dog to whom the gland had belonged. And through some stimulation not yet understandable, those memory-neurones were repeating their stored contents at more or less irregular intervals.

"That," said Jimmy reservedly, "may be important some day. In criminology, perhaps. I don't know. I've got to do a lot more work before I can publish anything on it." Then he added: "But your wild idea of a disembodied ego, an extra intelligence, hasn't turned out. The first dog acted queerly, but the last didn't."

DOROTHY said soberly: "I still think what I thought at that time. Look here, Jimmy! You could do the revival experiment yourself, couldn't you?"

"I dare say," said Jimmy.

"On a human being?"

"Better than on a dog. Carl showed me how. He's going to instruct a lot of surgeons and their assistants, in hopes it will turn out useful in some operation or other, and prove its worth."

"Perhaps that was his idea," said Dorothy gravely. "But I doubt it. He wanted me to marry him, you know."

"Yes. He told me."

"And, Jimmy, Carl isn't—brilliant like you are." As Jimmy grinned at her, she insisted, "Don't be modest, Jimmy! He's got a good mind. A sound one. But he isn't brilliant. And, Jimmy—he knows it. And after that reading of yours, that showed the dog four times as intelligent as a man for a while . . ."

Jimmy looked down indulgently. Then he took her meaning. He started. She nodded again.

"He's been making experiments we don't know anything about."

"But he wouldn't try—what you're hinting!" said Jimmy harshly.

"I'm afraid he might," said Dorothy. "He'd risk anything to be a really great scientist, since he can't have me. And if he's taught you his technic of revival for use on a human being—"

"Confound!" said Jimmy, uneasily. "I hope you're wrong! Good Lord—"

"I'm right," said Dorothy. "I'm sure I'm right. I'm so sure, that to stop him I—I— Jimmy—would you like to marry me tomorrow?"

"Dorothy! You know it! But what's that got to do with Carl?"

"If we went away, together, he couldn't try what I know he's planning. Not until he'd trained somebody else. And we could work out something, with time to think in, that would stop him altogether."

Jimmy drew a deep breath. His hand on her arm tightened.

Someone came running from the dance-floor. "*Cottrell! Mr. Cottrell! Mr. Cottrell! Mr. Cottrell!*"

"Here!" said Jimmy. "What's the matter?"

"A phone call, sir," panted the waiter. "Someone calling for you, sir, and saying it's a matter of life and death, sir!"

Dorothy caught her breath.

"Jimmy! He's done it!"

But Jimmy was sprinting for the telephone. Dorothy, dead-white, came after him as fast as she could. He left her behind, and when she reached the phone he was in the act of slamming down the receiver.

"The car," he said crisply. "He did do it, Dorothy! Left suicide notes, a dictaphone record, and everything else necessary! Come on!"

He half-lifted her from the ground in his

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haste. He swept her with him to the car. He fumbled in the key, backed out, and went streaking down the road with the cool night-wind beating on the front of his shirt.

"There's a blanket in the back," he said coldly. "We didn't get your wraps. Put it around you."

DOROTHY obeyed. Her teeth were chattering, but not from cold.

"J-Jimmy! Tell me!"

"He's mailed suicide notes to the police," said Jimmy icily, "explaining what he planned to do. Explaining that he was going to call me, and start the experiment the instant I answered. He had it figured out just how long it should take us to get there. He'll be just barely dead. The epinephrine is ready, laid out. Everything's all set to revive him."

Dorothy wailed: "But—J-Jimmy . . ."

Jimmy went around a corner on two wheels.

"What else can I do?" he demanded savagely. "What else *can* I do?"

"N-nothing," said Dorothy faintly, "but I'm—frightened!"

Jimmy braked frantically, swung out of the way of a dark parked car, and jammed down the accelerator again.

"I've been—thinking," said Dorothy in a whisper. "That—extra intelligence without any body might—might know things. It couldn't take his body, ordinarily, but it might read what he knew. It—it would know that he'd prepared everything. It—knew what was in the ethyl-chloride bottle. It—"

"I've got to try to revive him," said Jimmy grimly. "I'll jump out at the laboratory. You take the car, get to a phone somewhere, and get an ambulance. Cops, if you like."

The car sped on through the night. Miles and minutes passed together, both of them horribly long. The motor hummed under the hood. Wind whipped at them. Dorothy's teeth chattered again.

"I'm going to stay with you!" she said fiercely after a long time. "With you!"

The laboratory appeared, far, far ahead. It was dark. No, one window glowed.

"Carl's lab," said Jimmy. "If I hurry, maybe—"

The brakes screamed as he stopped. The car skidded over the gravel drive. It stopped and he tumbled out, racing instantly up the steps. Dorothy gathered up her long evening skirt and ran after him. The door was unlocked and swung ajar. Kreynborg had seen to that. Up one flight of steps. Two . . .

His hair disheveled, Jimmy stared down at the body of Kreynborg. It lay upon the operating table, stripped to the waist, in readiness for the treatment he had taught Jimmy to administer. The epinephrine was already in the hypodermic, whose point rested in an antiseptic solution.

A note in Kreynborg's handwriting lay beside it.

Dear Jimmy: Here's luck! But if it doesn't work, don't worry! It's my fault, and I've arranged things so you won't be blamed.

Carl.

"No pulse," said Jimmy grimly. "Of course no respiration. But I've got a chance."

He picked up the needle. He chose the great vein Kreynborg had pointed out upon his own body. He chose the exact spot Kreynborg had indicated. Dorothy said constrainedly:

"I'm turning on the meters, Jimmy."

Jimmy began the massage. It would take time. He did not dare look up. Twice he glanced at Kreynborg's face. It was placid, was serene, was infinitely restful and at peace. Kreynborg was dead, as the dog had been dead. The dog had been revived. Kreynborg might be.

"The meters are registering, Jimmy," said Dorothy unsteadily. She turned another switch. That second switch connected the recording devices. A humming sound arose. After the first trial of playing the phonograph record, Jimmy had attached a sound-box to play the record immediately the writing-needle recorded it. The barks from the memory-cells of the

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specimen-jar were heard, then, only the fraction of a second after they were recorded.

"No use yet awhile," said Jimmy, very grimly. "It takes time to get things going. I have to work the stuff along the vein, so enough of it will contract to prime the heart."

THE humming sound continued. Jimmy massaged the body of his friend, forcing the fluid down the line of the great vein so that the heart would become gorged with blood and contract convulsively, so beginning a cycle of self-excitation.

The phonograph sound-box said tinnily, "*Woof! Woof! Woof!*" There was a pause. The excited, hysterical barkings of a small dog followed.

Jimmy said between his teeth: "Carl had the culture-jar in here. The receptor's focused on it. Bring it over here, Dorothy."

He massaged, along the line of the great vein. He heard Dorothy stir. Then a tinny voice: "*Jimmy! Jimmy! For heaven's sake—*"

Dorothy made an inarticulate sound in her throat. Jimmy jerked his head about. She had, at first, forgotten the receptor. Now she had reached out her hand to take it away from the culture-jar. And now she stood gray-faced, pointing. The receptor-unit was focused upon the culture-jar. And Kreynborg's voice came from it!

"*Don't revive my body, Jimmy! Don't revive my body! Something strong and terrible seized me as I—came out. It is very strong and very evil, Jimmy! I am sealed in these memory-cells, and it takes all my strength to use them to send my voice through them. The Thing is evil, Jimmy! Don't let it live in my body! Don't! Don't! Don't!*"

There was a sudden, abrupt pause. The sound-box said, "*Woof! Woof! Woof!*" followed by the hysterical barking of a smaller dog.

Jimmy found himself massaging automatically. Sweat stood out on his face. The sound-box chattered again: "*It put me into this! It is stronger than I am! I cannot ever leave these brain-cells again until they die! Kill me, Jimmy! But don't revive my body! The Thing is in it, Jimmy! The extra intelligence!*"

Jimmy massaged automatically. Dorothy said hoarsely: "You hear, Jimmy! Stop! You must stop!"

Jimmy said more hoarsely still: "I'm—trying to! I can't!" The sweat formed in droplets on his forehead. "It is—physical contact, perhaps. Take a stick. Something! Hit my hands! Knock them away!"

Instead, Dorothy threw both her arms about his neck and flung her weight against him. He staggered, thrown off his balance. They fell to the floor together. They stared at each other, gasping.

The tinny voice wailed above them:

"*I cannot leave these memory-cells while they live, and they may live forever! Don't let the Thing have my body, Jimmy! Let my body die! It's evil, Jimmy! It's evil—*"

Jimmy got to his feet. His face was gray. He deliberately picked up the receptor-unit. He moved it to the still motionless body which had been Kreynborg's. He touched it to the frontal bone. He listened.

DOROTHY covered her ears with her hands and cowered to the floor. Because they heard the thoughts in Kreynborg's brain. And it was not Kreynborg thinking. It was Something else which was using Kreynborg's brain, and filled with a riotous glee, a horrible exultation as Kreynborg's body fought its way back to life and strength. And the things the Something was thinking.

Dorothy cowered to the floor. Jimmy snapped off the switch so he could no longer hear them. He picked up the hypodermic.

He went with a precarious steadiness to the shelf of chemicals and drugs. He filled the hypodermic.

He turned back to the operating table,

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and the heart that had been Kreynborg's was beating steadily, now. Kreynborg's body no longer needed massage or help. It was coming back to life muscle by muscle and limb by limb. The heart throbbed visibly in Kreynborg's bony chest.

His jaws clamped tight, his eyes hard as stone, Jimmy stopped the beating of that heart.

There was a horrible, convulsive movement of the body on the table. It stirred. It sat up. Its eyes opened—and they were not Kreynborg's eyes. They were human only in construction. The light that glowed in them was sheer horror to look at. The arms moved. The hands curved, to rend and tear.

Jimmy faced it desperately: "Too late!" he said through utterly stiff lips. "You can't do it! Not with Kreynborg's body!"

The Thing—which had been Kreynborg—uttered a cry which was inhuman in its unspeakable rage and hatred. And as it cried, it stiffened. The light of horror faded from its eyes. Kreynborg's body fell back upon the table.

Jimmy rinsed out the hypodermic and partly refilled it with epinephrine before the police arrived. He listened again to the sounds that came from the sound-box when the receptor was focussed on the culture-jar. Then he smashed the culture-jar. And it was so entirely clear that Kreynborg had tried an experiment in revival, forcing Jimmy to help by telling him only too late, that there was absolutely no question of anything but a coroner's verdict of "unintentional suicide." And Jimmy took Dorothy home.

"I don't know what it was," he said tonelessly, as he very carefully turned a corner. "If you want to be fanciful, you can say it was an intelligence from some other set of dimensions that couldn't transfer to ours physically, so tried to do it—psychologically. Or maybe Kreynborg was right, and a brain that has been revived after being deprived of its ego for a certain length of time has—well—brain fever."

"I heard Carl," she said unsteadily. "He—he was in the culture-jar. Why don't you say the extra intelligence was a—devil?"

"I have a scientific prejudice," said Jimmy, "against explanations which involve the supernatural. It makes for mental laziness, and the results of such thinking are matters of faith rather than reason, and—and—"

"What?"

"I'm too much afraid it's true."

Then Dorothy said brokenly: "But poor Carl—he—"

"You didn't listen at the last," said Jimmy awkwardly. "Carl's all right. The Thing had no more power to harm him when I smashed the jar. He said so. And he knew."

Dorothy pressed close: "Jimmy—I was afraid! Don't let's ever—be separated again! Please! I—I'm frightened! I'm afraid I'll—get hysterical!"

"Shock," said Jimmy. "That's all. You need a change of scene. And—and so do I. Lord, yes!" He laughed shakily. "You said something about—getting married tomorrow. I think that would take our minds off—all this. We could go up in the mountains and watch sunsets and forget all science. How does that strike you as an idea?"

"I think," said Dorothy, "it's fine! I—always said you were brilliant, Jimmy."

THE END

Wood's Enemy

MOST telephone poles which fall eventually do so as a result of their being eaten through by mushrooms.

—*J. W. Holden.*

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Rodeo

By ARTHUR HAWTHORNE CARHART

Fighting to regain his self-respect, Hi Lowe, rodeo star, finds that it helps a lot when you help somebody else

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

FROM star rodeo performer to rodeo bum was the descent made by Hi Lowe in two years of drinking and carousing. He started on the downward trail when he thought he got a raw decision from a rodeo judge, and he paused only when his pal, Sixty Jones, went to the hospital after being thrown by a bronc at the Cheyenne, Wyoming, rodeo.

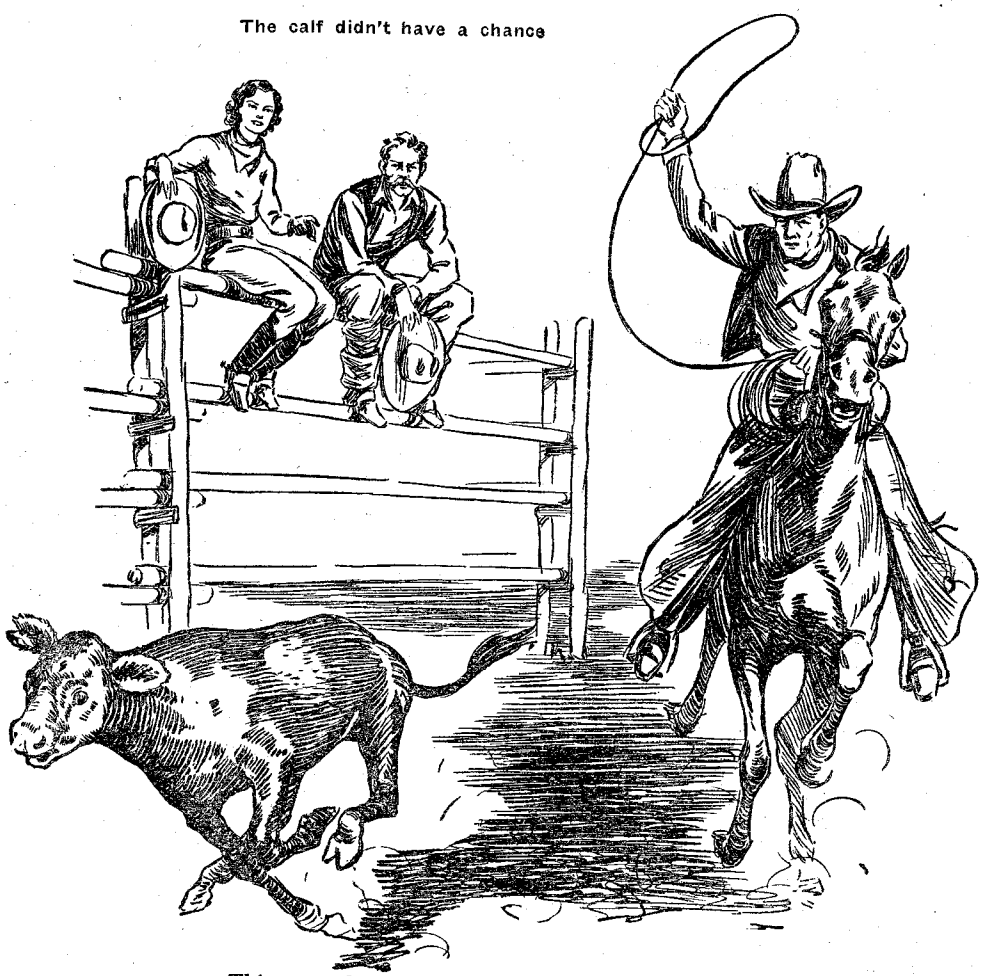
Old Andy Wallace, stockman, agreed to get the best medical help, in an attempt to save Sixty's life, on the condition that Hi straighten out and try to remake himself into a man.

Hi went to the Wallace ranch to work as a cowboy.

There he met Steve Capps, foreman, and was warned by Capps that he must stay off a certain distant part of the range, under Andy Wallace's orders.

Hi obeyed that injunction—until he got lost in a snowstorm and found himself in the forbidden territory. Then he discovered a tombstone that set him to thinking furiously. He was going to demand a showdown with Wallace, but Dawn, Wallace's daughter, persuaded him it would not be wise to ask about the tombstone at the present time.

The calf didn't have a chance



This story began in the Argosy for November 9

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CHAPTER XIII.

"YOU'LL ROPE!"

"NOW, take it easy, baby," ordered Cross-bar Cameron. "Listen, Honey, take it easy!"

He bit Honey's ear, playfully, and with purpose.

"Sing," advised Mel Myers. "Sing, an' we'll all start fightin' our heads."

"If he sings," said Hack Nash, "I'll go mad an' have to be shot."

"Ladies an' gentlemen," sing-songed Mel as he swept his hat wide and bowed toward the corral poles, "we have in the arena a wild bronc named Honey, an' a wild hombre named Cross-bar Cameron. You'll know Cross-bar 'cause he wears boots."

The little audience perched on the top pole grinned; there were all three Wallaces, and Hi Lowe. Sixty Jones was trying out some wild horses. Andy had to have more broncs, wild pitchers, that would make men ride when they were poured into the arena. The four on the fence were passing judgment, along with the others, as to whether the horses rated or not.

"And on our right," continued Mel grandly, "is Sixty Jones, the kid from Sundance. He's been trained on bob-wire an' rattlesnake oil; an' this bronc here's been rationed on nettles an' loco weed. Watch chute thirteen, people; watch chute thirteen!" Mel talked through his nose and made a clownish burlesque of arena announcing.

"Honey, take it easy," insisted Cross-bar, and chewed the bronc's ear just to give Honey something to think about while Sixty, grinning, and doffing his hat to the four-person audience, swung up.

"Jerk the blind," ordered Sixty, and settled into the saddle.

Hack Nash spun loose the nose twister, Cross-bar jerked away the blindfold they had been forced to put over Honey's eyes while the saddle was being cinched at the snubbing post, and Steve Capps, who was pick-up, spurred his horse ready to get Sixty if the kid sky-rocketed.

"Pour 'em out; out of chute thirteen!" yelled Mel.

There was no chute, but they could play there was.

Honey, a yellowish wild one, quivered, crouched, blinked, and then started sky-hooking until Hi Lowe could see tops of alfalfa stacks under the tawny bronc's belly.

"Powder River!" yelled Cross-bar, fanning his hat. "He's a wild wolf."

"Take him, Steve," shouted Andy. "Don't let that bronc believe he can be ridden."

Steve rode, caught Sixty from the saddle, let the kid slide to safety on the far flank of Steve's own horse, and then the foreman rode to catch the dragging hackamore rope, so Honey could be snubbed down, hazed to the snorting post, and the saddle shucked off.

Sixty came running toward the four on the fence. He grinned.

"There's one for the buckin' string, Mr. Wallace," he called to Andy. Then to Hi, "I can ride Wildcat, fellow. That Honey's got the same shoulder whip that Wildcat had. Hi, I know I can ride Wildcat."

"Kid, you can't eat up saddle punishment after bein' in a hospital bed—" began Hi in anxious protest.

"Aw, six months ago," scoffed Sixty. "I'm all bone an' gristle now."

"From eatin' a lotta pie," said Hack Nash. "Gristle comes from fodderin' on custard pie."

"You let Mom Peters hear you say that," challenged Mel. "She'll feed you rat poison in your pie. Not a bad idee at that, is it, Cross-bar? Bulldoggers ain't nothin' worth savin'."

"You know danged well," said Hack Nash, "that bulldoggers an' ropers—"

"Are the aristocrats of the arena," chided Mel. "Yeah, they say that; but it's the clown, boys, that gets the laughs. An' stidy money. Me, an' Buttercup."

"You an' the other jackass," said Hack Nash. "Sometimes I agree with Andy that Buttercup's the most sensible—"

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Mel made a flailing swipe at Hack, the bulldogger ducked, and Mel, as Hack was bent over, got astride him. Hack, willing to keep up the rough fun, bucked Mel off into a particularly dirty corner of the corral. Mel was making faces and dusting his pants.

"Stay there," said Hack. "You've reached your level."

"How about lettin' me have a whack at Wildcat, Mr. Wallace," suggested Sixty. "I want to show myself I can ride 'em."

"Casey and Irby'll be in next week with three cars more of wild range stuff," said Andy. He was just home from selling his beef and a scouting trip in Colorado after bad horses. "I need a real top twister to try out this new batch. Bust your neck later if you want, but wait until we get enough good buckers sorted out."

"Two more broom-tails in here, Sixty," said Cross-bar from the cutting corral.

"Snub 'em an' we'll slap leather on 'em," called Sixty.

"Easy, kid," Hi called after Sixty. "Don't try to ride the world."

"Son," called Sixty, "we're ridin' the world."

"You two are good for each other," said Dawn to Hi.

"He's all right, Sixty is," agreed Hi. He thought of the day Sixty had ridden right at death trying to get back Hi Lowe's saddle. Long new trail since that time; long new trail with the end hazy and uncertain and—what at the end? Hi Lowe didn't know. He'd followed many hazy trails on a gamble. He'd find out what was at the end of this one when he got there. Sure. He always had found out.

"Those broom-tails won't buck," said Andy Wallace with a little disgust as he saw the last two of a carload of range horses. "It takes warm blood in a horse to make him buck. Old Steamboat, for example."

Hub Wallace slid from the corral fence. "I'm going to try a little roping; day's too nice not to limber up."

"Get the stop watch," said Andy to Dawn, and she slid down on the outside to go to the house for the watch. She glanced at Hi. She was leaving him with Andy so there could be man-talk between them.

"You saw Steamboat buck," suggested Hi Lowe. There was a common ground on which he and Andy Wallace had found meeting place. They talked rodeo business without restraint in their words. Whatever else lay between them, they were arena men.

"Yes," said Andy. "Yes, I did. I saw Steamboat ridden; when Otto Plaga did it. Only time." He watched the men at the snubbing post putting a blindfold on one of the two horses. "Those little old fourteen-hand pelters can't pitch a man," scoffed Andy. "Ain't got it in 'em. No warm blood. Got to have warm blood. Steamboat had long fetlocks. Morgan, he was, partly. Fetlocks showed it. Spirit comes with the warm blood; just like warm blood in men decides whether they quit or not."

"Midnight's fetlocks were long," said Hi after a moment.

"Yeah, Middy was another that had warm blood in him," agreed Andy. "Fool idea people get sometimes, that these are trained buckers. Why, hell, they've just got it in 'em. Just won't let any man ride 'em."

"Story went around that Midnight was gentle enough in harness," said Hi.

"I heard that," agreed Andy. "Might be so. Fact is, I've been around that black devil. Never knew when he was going to swing his head and knock the breath out of you. Just ready to fight it out with a man, those broncs that are worth their salt, any time they get a chance. Always on the fight. People would get a better slant on the bucking contests if they knew that; knew they're always a contest between rider and animal."

The two broom-tails didn't buck. They ran, like mice. All right for a wild horse race, or surcingles could be put on them, and those boys who were trying to break

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in might be given a chance to ride 'em. But for the top hands there had to be real sunfishing, sky-rolling broncs; devils that pitched and wouldn't quit.

There's tradition back of this; like traditional range rivalry is back of every rodeo contest. In the old days big outfits ran maybe two hundred wild horses into the corrals after fall rounding. During the winter months the outfit's bronc peeler was supposed to break out seventy-five or a hundred saddle animals. But broncs were found that couldn't be ridden. The outfit took them to roundup. And bets were laid when the peeler of some other outfit said he could ride that one, or any other wall-eyed, spavin-brained son of a stallion. Broncs got reputations; and peelers got proud of their prowess. Just as ropers had pride in their speed and accuracy, and bet their pay and hat on their skill. Every true rodeo contest has its foundation in business of the open range.

"All right, Hub," said Andy as Dawn came with the stop watch. "Let's find out if you, or your rope, have ossified."

There was a little corner of the Wallace corrals that was fitted as a standard roping chute; barrier, foul line, and all. It was another clear indication of how keenly Andy Wallace looked toward a day when practice here would land Hub high money in arena contests.

A CALF was turned loose. Mel Myers held the barrier. Hub yelled and his pony charged when the calf was past the thirty foot mark.

"Give 'em a necklace," yelled Hack Nash encouragingly.

Hub went leaping to make the tie.

Hub looked toward Andy. The old man's features were not very encouraging.

"You threw a community loop," said Andy shortly. "Too large. Took you two seconds to take the slack out of it. Your time was twenty-three and eight tenths, Hub. You've got to keep the loop small for calves. Hey, Steve, you demonstrate."

Steve Capps hesitated. Then took his place back of the barrier that Mel held.

"Watch," said Dawn.

Hi Lowe was watching; Capps, lean, dark, loose-seated on the horse, both animal and man seemingly pulled down, ready for trigger release. Steve made a little loop, held, half-loose, in his hand.

"Pour out the calf," ordered Andy.

There wasn't a hair's width between Capps' roping horse and the barrier when it flipped. The calf wasn't a dozen jumps beyond the thirty-foot mark before the little loop cinched in and Steve Capps was flying down the rope, hand over hand, to the calf. He made the tie and signaled.

"Speedy," said Hi, under his breath.

"He always is," said Dawn, a touch of admiration in her voice.

"There," bawled Andy at Hub. "See that loop, son? No false motions; no lost time. Steve did that in twenty and five."

"Twenty and five tenths seconds?" Hi turned on Andy. The old man's eyes smiled a little, but his face was masked as he nodded.

"That's good in any arena," said Hi.

"I know it," said Andy gruffly. "The darned fool says he's a rancher, not a circus man."

Hi sat and saw Hub loop another calf. Better time. Andy was mollified; but he yelled at Hub on the next two catches. Yelled and growled, like an old wolf teaching his cub to cut down meat.

"I'd like to toss a few," suggested Hi.

"Go to it," directed Andy.

Hi's heart beat up in rhythm as he saddled Punch, his horse. While he had roped a lot this fall, it wasn't like this contest roping where all speed has to be put into every move. Capps hadn't contest-roped either, and that time he'd made was good.

Andy Wallace came to where Hi was saddling Punch; walking in that careful way that always reminded that whatever the old man did had to be without violent twists.

"You dallie or tie hard fast?" asked Andy.

"Dallie," replied Hi.

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"Good," approved Andy. "We all dallie."

There's tradition back of this, too. Northern ropers, who rode the plains, tied their lariats hard-and-fast, by bringing the rope up through the forks of the saddle and around the pommel. The Texan learned to make a loose hitch, a dallie, around his saddle pommel, for if he tied into a mean longhorn, and his horse shied or came uncorked, the loose-tied rope would slip and both animals would be free to go their way instead of getting desperately snarled in mesquite or scrub oak. Horse and cow critter could be picked up later if the free hitched rope were used.

It was a hard-and-fast tie that had wreaked such damage on Andy Wallace when he was almost reaching to take the roper championship; and he insisted, because of this bitter experience, that his men must dallie. Either tie is allowed in the rodeo except where roping had been refined by people who insist cowhands must be polite to calves and steers.

Hi formed a loop as small as the one Capps had made.

"Pour 'em out," he ordered.

He had to rein hard to keep Punch from fouling the barrier. But then they were away. The calf was a fast one; more spry than the one Capps had caught. But the loop was small, and true. Hi dodged the calf's feet, made the hog-tie, jumped free, throwing his hand high as a signal.

"Good time," said Andy. "Two-tenths of a second short of what Steve made. Try it again. Watch, Hub; now watch."

Things went haywire the second try; the calf busted himself, and according to rules, Hi had to allow him to get to his feet, then throw him. They all were laughing by the time that tie was finished.

"A slow freight catch," declared Crossbar.

There was another calf in the chute. Hi tried again. It was a tenth of a second above Steve Capps' time, and that was good.

"Gee, Hi," said Hub, "tell me your secrets."

"Lean a clean life, don't bet two nine-spots when a man opens with jacks against you, and keep your loop small," said Hi, and there was a lot of soberness in his speech, though he was laughing.

He looked up to see Andy tramping away, head down. Turned to see Steve Capps' dark eyes studying him intently; something like the day they had looked over a rifle that Capps held in his lap and suggested that if Hi really wanted to know if Capps would shoot, all he had to do was ride on and find out. Hi got away from the group that were chattering around the roping chute. He put his saddle in the shed, came around the corner, and ran directly into Steve.

"That was good time," drawled Capps in a noncommittal way.

"You made good time yourself," stated Hi.

"I've made better," said Steve Capps.

"Then why don't you enter in some arena?"

Steve rolled a smoke thoughtfully, moodily.

"Thought I would, once," he said. "Andy coached me for all he was worth. He knows roping, every trick, every split second, both thirty-foot line roping, and lap-and-tap. The old man coached me, and I guess maybe it was bred into me besides. He held the watch on me just like he's coaching Hub now. The old man was getting me ready to go in and startle the shows."

"You never contested."

"Yes. But light came to me. You know how Andy's got his heart all set to see Hub, the king of all ropers."

"Plain as day. Sticks out all over the old man."

"Sure. Well, I saw it in time."

Steve looked up, with that trick of squinting over a match flame just struck.

"Hub was coming up," he said. "I roped in a few short grass shows that nobody ever heard about. And it got into my blood. You know, the cheering, and the kick you get out of being top man in an arena contest."

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"I know," Hi Lowe drew a deep breath.

"I knew I couldn't stop, once it took hold of me," said Steve soberly.

"Thought the kid could beat you?"

Steve Capps whipped his gaze back from the far horizon over in the grassy hills country. "No," he answered steadily. "I knew I could beat him; that I'd always be able to. Andy's done so dog-gone much for me I couldn't get in the kid's way. Hub can go to the top in ordinary company."

"You could have done your bit, then pulled out," said Hi.

Steve shook his head soberly. "'Tain't in the Wallace creed," he said. "The old man'd known after I'd won a few times. So I got interested in ranching; just awful interested."

"And cleared the track for Hub."

Steve nodded, and struck a second match.

"Andy's done a heap for me, too," observed Hi.

Steve squinted over the match. "Yeah," he said. "Yeah."

The foreman nodded again, almost to himself. Hi was quiet.

"I thought," said Steve slowly, "you'd be wondering why I wasn't roping in some of the arenas, and figured it was best to give you the facts first hand. Since—we're both sorta somewhat in the same boat, in a way."

Steve stood a minute, then went into the barn, whistling; a little off key, if Hi had noticed.

He didn't notice any sound. There was too much churning around in his thoughts. He didn't notice when Andy Wallace caught up with him and walked along, out into the open barnyard, to where nobody could possibly hear what they said. Then Andy stopped Hi.

"I just heard what Steve Capps said," stated Andy as he faced Hi. "And I want to tell you that I had his play figured out but couldn't prove it. And listen, you," and Andy began shaking his finger into Hi's face, "if you listen to Steve Capps, and figure that you've got some obligation to meet that'll best be paid out by you staying out of the arena contests where Hub'll be roping his year— Say! I want to tell you, right now, that if you ever expect to measure up, and pay off to me, anything like what I want in pay for anything I've done for me, you'll rope! I'll never get over it, never, if Hub doesn't show up; I want him to make the championship. But I don't want him to make it by someone better laying down. Do you hear? Well—then— By the Eternal, if you feel any obligation to me, you'll rope. And if you don't— I'll feel you've sold me out and smeared me with common disgrace."

Andy's chin was shaking with emotion. There was the queer glitter in his eyes.

"That's plain, isn't it; plain as anything Capps said just now? All right, you rope, or by the Lord I'll want to know why!"

Andy whirled and stumbled away.

Hi Lowe stood, dazed.

Any way it added, this didn't figure up. Something missing, some important figure. And it wouldn't add up right until he found it.

But there was no use questioning. It didn't figure out. Some day it would. He'd play the game, remember his promise to old Andy Wallace, keep his eyes open. ears alive, head up, and play the game.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHORT GRASS SHOW.

THOSE who sit in the amphitheaters at a rodeo see a show; a great number see nothing more. Particularly in those shows staged in great eastern coliseums, or in the famous big-time western arenas, the rodeo takes on the appearance of a spectacle. Those bigger shows, with their fat purses, are the Major League games, the rangeland Olympics, highly organized and efficiently directed. There the top hands fight it out to see which is the best bulldogger, the slickest roper, the most able bronc twister.

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But out in the stock country, on the range, there are home-made rodeos, haywire and hilarious, that break out like a rash when warm weather hits the hills, and somewhere, round about, a local show will be going even after harvest moon has waned. Some of these build up a recognized place in the Association shows. Others remain bush league and sand lot rodeos; pumpkin shows, short-grass events, staged for the local people, by local people. They're the places the arena men start from after they've outgrown the home ranch.

If you really want to yell, here's the real place. Sure, you can yell at Cheyenne, or Monte, or Pendleton, or Calgary; sure you can. But you do it like a lady or gent.

At a short grass show you cut loose and whoop. Who cares?

Take the Tall Pine Roundup. Something to shout about. Rodeo? Hell, brother, it's a riot. Batten down your boots and hitch up your breeches, and "Tell 'em at Tall Pine!"

"I'm a wild wolf. My night to howl!"

That's the stuff. That's the real McCoy!

McCoy? Who was he? Well, I'm a slue-foot Sioux. You didn't know he was a cattle-buyer at Dodge when trail herds still were driven in there; and that so many chiselers got trading on his name he made up the slogan; that he was the *real* McCoy. Sure; that's it.

History. Oh, hell; who cares? Today counts at Tall Pine!

"I'm a wild wolf. I'm curly!"

That's the stuff. Stretch yore lungs. Ain't she goin' grand?

Dust smoked on the track of Tall Pine's Roundup. Arena officials, with big blue ribbons printed black with the word "Committee" choused around, yelling at each other.

"Let's get the buckin' goin', Bill."

"Charley said he'd tend to that."

"Well, where in sin's Charley."

"How in hell should I know where Charley is."

"Let's get the buckin' started."

"No, it's time fer calf ropin', Slim."

"Can't start that. Dode Kethley's in both that an' the relay race. They're linin' up in the relay right now."

"Well, where's Charley; let's get the buckin' goin'. Hell, we're still goin' to be here at midnight."

"Who cares?"

Hi Lowe sat humbly, in the dust, beside Sixty Jones near the bucking chutes. The whole Wallace outfit was here, even including Mom Peters, Irby Paul and Casey Owens.

Streaking back at Hi Lowe came remembrance of last season, when he had sat thus at Cheyenne; and beyond that he remembered those little pumpkin-circuit rodeos he had roped in before he entered the bigger arenas. Here's where you saw them on their way; the boys going up, the has-beens coming down. Cross roads, these short grass rodeos; where comers and goers passed.

"Pete, see if you can scare up Charley. Let's get the buckin' started." The committeeman was getting exasperated.

"Boys seem to be sorta millin'," observed Cross-bar as he hunkered down beside Sixty and Hi. "I might sing to keep the crowd quiet if they ask me, but they ain't asked me."

"They know better," said Mel Myers, who had heard.

"Why does Andy Wallace bring his outfit to this little show?" Hi asked of Cross-bar.

"He gets his season's luck at this show," said Cross-bar sagely. "Here's where he won his first ropin' money, an' here's where he started his rodeo contractin', an' he allus starts the season here just for common an' general luck. An' say, she's a ring-tailed wonder, this show, ain't she?"

Luck again; an arena man's luck. Hi Lowe starting up from the pumpkin circuit, headed for the top, without his old Pendleton saddle.

"Hello," called Dawn. They saw her break away from a group that included

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Andy, Hub, and some strangers. Dawn came running.

"Who are the dudes?" asked Cross-bar after first talk had passed.

"They're New York men," said Dawn. "The good-looking one, talking to dad, is Louis Dittmore. Got money. Mason Drake, the short, dark man, follows the race horses. Both say they're interested in the show in New York next fall."

"They officials back there?"

"No; I guess just interested. Chalky Hewitt, you know, of the Cross Ox dude ranch, introduced them to dad. Dittmore and Drake are guests at the Cross Ox. They said they wanted especially to meet all our bunch because we're going to the Garden show this fall. Come on over."

Dawn ragged them along. There was talk. Dittmore made smooth remarks. It didn't capture Dawn's attention as he wished. But Hub was talking big and handsome. His breath was stiff with liquor. Hi edged closer to Dawn and whispered confidentially.

"Who said no saloon in Tall Pine?" he asked.

"There isn't; Hub got it from that Drake." Dawn turned troubled eyes. "That pair have a flask in every pocket."

"They're puttin' themselves out to be agreeable."

"Yes, and that kind never does that without some purpose. They're city men —and they're too neighborly."

A COMMITTEEMAN yelled, "Here's Charley, Slim. Here's Charley. He was drinkin' pop with Baldy Rinker. Now let's start ropin'."

"Shake it up, you ropers."

"I'll herd Hub over to the chutes," suggested Hi.

"Hi, please keep him out of trouble," begged Dawn. "I don't think dad realizes Hub's been drinking. Dad's too busy with the stock."

Hi Lowe grinned, sourly, as he tramped toward roughly made chutes. Andy Wallace had jerked a man named Lowe out of the gutter for some unexplained reason, and now this Lowe was asked to block the way when Andy's own son started hell raising.

Hub wasn't much older than Sixty Jones. But Sixty had been through rougher territory than Hub, and knew trails and signs along 'em. Hub's roping skill had gone to his head just a little; and that wasn't good. Made Hub fight his head sometimes. Hub was an all right kid, but he was only a sprout. Needed seasoning.

Chalky Hewitt and Mason Drake caught up with Hub and Hi at the tie rack where roping horses waited. Hi got a good look at Drake. Bristly hair, beady eyes, a smile that only stretched his mouth without his beady eyes changing a particle. Hi didn't like Drake any more than he liked Chalky Hewitt.

Hewitt was a good roper. There's been talk of shady deals in arenas in which Hewitt figured, but no proof. Contests thrown for money, so the rumor ran. It was a cinch Hewitt's record wasn't quite clean. The way Hewitt duded up in pink silk shirts and yellow kerchiefs, fawn-colored breeches and light tan boots with purple inlaid hearts on 'em, didn't take the curse off his unpleasant features; his catfish mouth, with too much wrinkled cheek on either side, his round-ended nose, and that too-thin web between eyes that were cold.

"Where's Dittmore?" asked Hub. "He said he'd talk to me here."

"I'll talk," said Drake huskily. "Ditt's chasing another skirt; that ash blond kid, with the oh-daddy eyes and swell legs. Soompin' to chase, eh, buddy?"

"That's my sister." Hub's face was pasty white.

"Easy, Hub," said Chalky. "Drake didn't know."

"No offense meant," said Drake hastily. "Sure not. She's a swell dame. It's no offense to say she's got a swell figger. Nice girl. Sure nice. Ditt's a swell fellow. Picks thoroughbreds. Get me? Here, just to show no ill feelings, buddy." Drake offered a flask.

"Leave it alone," ordered Hi.

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"Well, who in hell invited you into this?" demanded Drake.

"I'm hornin' in," said Hi levelly.

"You and who else?" said Drake belligerently. "When a guy's asking a gent to drink just to show there's no hard feelings. Drink up, kid."

HUB started to raise the flask. Hi got hold of it, jerked, got it free, threw it beyond the horses.

"Why, you damn punk!" blared Drake. "You lousy chiseler—"

"Fight," yelled someone over by the roping chutes. "Fight."

Hi held himself. Drake had started for him, but Hewitt held the dark-faced city man. "Don't go startin' trouble," said Hewitt. "Easy, now. Or this proposition of ours might get upset. Hold everything, Drake."

"What's the idea?" Hub demanded angrily of Hi.

"You're ropin', kid; first contest of the season," said Hi steadily. "I've proved a number of times you can't rope and get drunk at the same time. Take my word for it. This show's our luck. Don't spoil it with gin."

"Hub Wallace, you're up next," yelled the man named Charley.

"Smart guy, eh?" sneered Drake. He planted himself cockily, his short, stout legs spread in front of Hi Lowe.

"Don't pick trouble, Drake," advised Chalky. "Lowe here might figure in our plans. He's one of the Wallace crowd. Want to make some money, Lowe? Easy money?"

"I'll make money," said Hi. "But it'll not be your kind. And probably not so easy, either. What I do get I'll be able to spend without washing my paws afterward."

"Smart guy, eh?" Drake said again. "Tall Pine wise guy. And pure. Too smart and pure to even talk about making some easy money. Go to hell, then."

"He's been kicked out of arenas before," said Chalky Hewitt insinuatingly. "Just as well not fool with him, maybe. He's done as a roper anyway; he'll not last the season."

They turned away, toward the roping chutes. Hi heard the announcer call Hub's roping time. Twenty-one and two-tenths. Pretty fair.

Hi watched Hub come over to talk with Drake and Hewitt. He didn't go close enough to get into that talk. It would have boiled up more trouble. Then Hewitt was called to rope.

"Didn't you talk yourself out of some sure money!" he flung at Hi as he passed.

"What money I get'll be hard and clean," said Hi. He'd never like Hewitt. The fellow was too greasy smooth.

"Listen, you bum," said Hewitt, squaring away. "You're a sweet specimen to get sassy. You must think you're goin' to be high, like the smokes of hell, way you talk. King of all ropers this year, maybe." Hewitt's catfish mouth pulled back into his meaty cheeks.

"It wouldn't surprise me a particle," Hi countered.

"It'll give the world heart failure, though," sneered Hewitt. "Watch my time, guy, and see if you can beat it."

Hewitt shaved three tenths off Hub's time. A couple of local boys roped, then Hi was called.

First time into the arena without his saddle luck. He wondered what bad would happen. Something, without his luck.

He was too anxious; his first loop was too small and the calf stumbled so that loop missed. A yell went up, derisive. Hi used his second loop. He was only four tenths of a second slower than Hub. But calf roping is decided by tenths of seconds.

Saddle luck. He'd lost it. Saddle hands, of a man now dead, Bagwell, had fixed it so Sixty near lost his life instead of winning a championship at Cheyenne. Rodeo game had to be kept clean, or it would go to pot; never last if it turned rotten.

What in hell were Hewitt and this Drake mutt cooking up with Hub Wallace? Nothing straight.

"The smart guy—but not so smart with that kind of a performance," Drake threw

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at Hi. Hi said nothing. He was an arena man without his luck.

"Hub," called Hi. "Can I speak to you a minute?"

Hub came, slouching. "If you've got any preaching," warned Hub, "get someone to lend you a pulpit next Sunday. I'm white, free, and twenty-one. You get me, don't you?"

"*Bueno,*" said Hi with sudden heat. "Just go to hell if it looks that good to you. Just go on, and go to hell. You'll have fine company with Drake and Hewitt."

He spun away, angrily, and walked. Suddenly he was sorry. Shouldn't have antagonized Hub. He thought it over, and decided he'd better find Hub, smooth this over, and talk to the kid. But Hub, Hewitt and Drake had gone away from the roping chutes.

"Where's Hub?" Dawn asked as she came up with Sixty. "Is he with Hewitt and that Drake fellow?"

"Hub was with 'em a minute ago," said Hi. "Disappeared now. Come on, Sixty, let's round him up."

"Hub on the wild?" asked Sixty as they walked away.

"In bad company," replied Hi tartly.

They didn't find Hub around the arena before the wild horse race. That race snarled up and one rider got kicked senseless, which was more excitement than racing the wild ones, and stopped the race. In that turmoil the ponies got away and the arena events of the Tall Pine Roundup bumped to a finish.

"You didn't find him?" Dawn asked as she met Hi after people began leaving the grounds. She was alone and Hi knew she was hunting her brother. Andy and the other men were busy with stock and Dawn wanted to get Hub corraled before Andy might find him half drunk and bear down on him; something that might break open bitter rift between father and son.

"I'll trap him for you," Hi promised.

He'd gone the length of Tall Pine's dusty main street before he sighted Dittmore, Drake and Hewitt as they came from the town's frame hotel. A fourth one in the party was Hub; but he separated from the others immediately, and Hi caught up with the kid as Hub was climbing into one of the Wallace autos.

"Now where you headin' for?" asked Hi mildly.

"That's none of your damn business," said Hub.

"But supposin' it was," suggested Hi easily. "Where would you say you were headin'?"

"I'm going out to the Cross OX ranch and what of it?" Hub was all excited and warlike. "And maybe you want to know everything all at once. Well, listen, I'm signing a pool and split agreement with Chalky Hewitt, Tim Gillette and four or five other top ropers, and if you hadn't blown off so to Drake today, you might have been in this. But you've only made him sore, sore as a boiled owl. And he's going to use this bunch that's pooling and splitting to see that you get beat, plenty. That's what blowing off got you. Drake and Hewitt have worked this out, and no matter who wins, we'll all make a good season's money. I'm tired of this wet-nursing I've had for the past few years. I'm going to show all of you."

Hub stopped; he'd said too much. He realized it. Hi stood, his silence accusing. This was something that would tear old Andy Wallace in two when or if he found it out.

"What you got to say about it, you sweet-scented prodigal?" burst out Hub. "What you got to say, huh?"

"No contest," said Hi slowly. "You've sold yourself out to some slickers, and it's no contest."

Some rodeo men did that, but not the best ones. The poolers all knew what their own time might be. They froze out all others in the preliminaries and then loafed into the big money of the finals, and split the pot among them at the end. Some rodeo men had done just this thing, but they were the Chalky Hewitt kind, who didn't claim a ranch as a permament home.

"I suppose this Dittmore and Drake are

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New York sporting men that think they'd like to make the arena contests pay," suggested Hi. "Fix a few contests and get some bets on 'em."

"What of it?" said Hub. "It's just a show, that's all. What's wrong with gambling? You've got no license to talk."

"Here," said Hi as Hub flipped the ignition switch, "where do you think you're going?"

"Cross OX, and to hell with you."

"Just won't listen to reason," sighed Hi, as Hub reached to release the brake.

"Naw, I just won't listen," said Hub.

"Then listen to this," said Hi softly.

Hub didn't realize it was coming. Hi hit squarely with solid fist. Hub jerked, and slumped. Hi caught him, then heard the exclamation behind him. He turned.

Dawn stood, frozen in unbelief. Then came, tearing Hi aside, and reached to straighten the unconscious Hub in his seat.

"What made that necessary?" she demanded hotly.

"Maybe it wasn't necessary," replied Hi, as though thinking to himself. "But the kid was selling out Andy; bound and determined to drive out to the Cross OX and sign a pool-and-split agreement with Hewitt, these New York sports and other ropers they've lined up. It sounds crooked. Guess it wasn't necessary, maybe; but I had to stop him quick and certain—and I was thinking of his dad—I guess."

Dawn turned, staring. "Let's get in the car here, get Hub between us, and head for home," she said huskily.

They saw Sixty leading a string of hackamored horses; told him they were leaving Tall Pine; for him to advise the others. Hub recovered, and was sore and ready to fight. Dawn tore into him with bitter accusal; Hi sat stolidly.

"If you'd thought twice," said Dawn, "you'd never have considered such an offer."

"Say," flared Hub, "I thought three times. Listen, you two." Hub still was liquor wild. "Listen, I've already signed up, and Drake's got the contract. All we were going to do was celebrate at the Cross OX. How do you like that, both of you?"

The car tore along for a little way, then Dawn stopped it.

"You've got to drive, Hi," she said. "I can't see the road." Hi knew tears had bleared her vision. "I wouldn't trust Hub with the wheel right now." More accusal.

"For cripes sake," burst out Hub. "You'd think I'd ruined our family and gone plumb to hell, the way you talk."

"If we don't get that contract from Drake maybe you've started doin' both them things," Hi drawled. "If this leaks out you'll carry a black eye into every arena in America. That'd about crack the old man's heart in two. This isn't playing the game his way."

"Oh, Hub!" Dawn turned away, to cry softly.

Hub sat sullenly for miles, then said hotly, "I'm grown up!"

"I wish you weren't," countered Hi. "I'd paddle you proper."

Dawn hurried to the dark ranch house when they arrived. Hub stood, awkwardly, uncertainly. Hi saw the boy's profile against the bright window after Dawn had lit a lamp. Prodigal—and home.

"Haven't I brought honor and fame to the family now," said Hub meanly, as though he was caught in the same thought stream as Hi. "Just possible you knocked a little sense into me when you clouted me on the jaw. Try it again, for luck."

"You'll get plenty of wallops without my help." Hi rubbed it in a little. "Some of 'em heavy enough to hurt the others."

Hub's breath dragged in between clenched teeth in a ragged shudder; something like gusty breath after childhood tears. Hub was over twenty-one right enough, but the old man had done too much thinking for him, probably. He was a whipped kid right now.

"Oh, go walk the hell out of you!" said Hi roughly.

Hub turned toward the hills, hesitated, then tramped away, furiously, up the meadows of Andy's Fork.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

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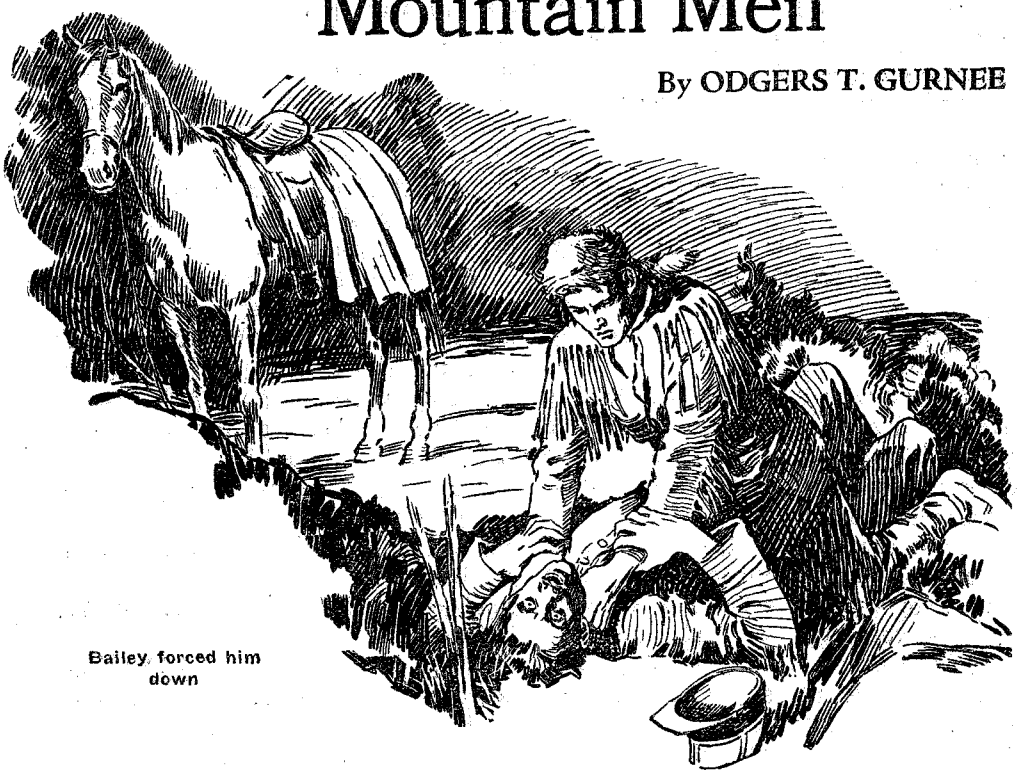
Taos Men Were Mountain Men

By ODGERS T. GURNEE



Bailey forced him down

Bailey Galt wanted to be a stalwart Mountain Man—an ambition which was to lure him into the very jaws of death

WHEN Bailey Galt's grandfather came up from tidewater Virginia in 1790, he paused at the Falls of the Ohio and looked north and south and west and stopped there.

Now, fifty years later, young Bailey stood at the Falls and looked north. There Marquette had gone to the black Wisconsin. He looked south. There Crockett had crossed the Trace to Natchez and Mississippi. He looked west. There Carson had threaded to St. Louis, the Cimarron and the Arkansas and the Purgatoire—the River of Lost Souls.

A hand seemed to press against his shoulders and a voice spoke out of nothing. "Catch up," it said, in the tongue of the Mountain Men. "Get on."

He laughed and caught up his pack and his long rifle and mounted the gangplank of the river packet, Washita, bound for St. Louis and the golden fleece.

St. Louis was a new world. The terraced city where Chouteau had built his fort swarmed with men from north and east and south and west—voyagers from the bateaus, keel boat men, New Orleans creoles, buffalo hunters and trappers from the plains and mountains beyond.

It was the Mountain Men young Bailey sought. And in that first night ashore he found them. A fur brigade of Bent and

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St. Vrain's fresh through the Cimarron desert from the purple hills of Nueve Mejico.

He found them in a hotel on Market Street—a hotel with a long side gallery that opened into a still longer bar. He had followed them, and before he entered he studied them through the lattice of the door. Two Delaware hunters, bronzed and lithe, with black hair that fell straight half-way to their waists, a French-Canadian, a red-haired giant who might have been Scotch, and the leader—gaunt, vast of shoulder, with piercing black eyes and hair that grew in an arc above a high forehead, as though a tonsured monk had forsworn the clipping blades.

All about them other men were talking, laughing, dancing with the women of the town. In a far corner he could see the musicians—swarthy men playing a guitar, a mandolin and a drum-like *tombe*.

He felt cautiously of the few coins in his pouch, and then went in, moving along the bar to a point behind the tall black leader of the trappers. There was good whisky, wine, and aguardiente. The aguardiente was cheapest, so he poured the raw white liquor into his glass and paid for it. But he didn't drink. He was watching his chance to speak to the man at his side.

It came suddenly, unexpectedly, out of the smoke-blue haze of the room. The red-haired man was dancing with a black-eyed girl, buxom, voluptuous. Beyond them, Bailey could see three dark men against the far wall, scowling, their eyes following the pair. The tempo of the dance quickened. The giant swung the girl up, his feet jiggling—up, down, up, down—like an Indian brave in the buffalo dance. Then he kissed her and the three men moved from the wall.

Bailey saw the gleam of candlelight on steel. He moved swiftly, caroming against the trapper at the bar, out into the center of the dancing figures. The three men surrounded the red-haired giant, unconscious of danger.

As he moved to meet them, Bailey discovered that he still held the glass of aguardiente. Then the first man struck. But as his arm moved, Bailey moved too, and the fiery liquor from his glass streamed into the man's eyes. A woman screamed, and the red-haired man spun the girl away from him. Two more knives lashed out and missed. The big man lunged and his arm struck like a wagon tongue against his nearest assailant, beating him down. Then the third man struck again and Bailey saw the red slash where it bit into the broad leather-coated back.

He swept the man away with a round arm swing but the knifer came back, striking this time at him. He saw the quick flash of the steel before his eyes and felt the sting as it slashed the flesh along his jaw. Then he had the wrist in his fingers and twisted. He heard a bone snap and saw the man fall away.

Then a pistol shot sounded from behind him and the one big lantern swinging from the beams above, guttered and died. A hand grasped his elbow and a voice sounded in his ear:

"Catch up," it said. He felt himself being hurried along through the faint reflection of moonlight. Then he saw outside, running down a hard dirt alley south of the city, out beyond the sand road that led from river edge to city square, they halted and he saw his companion. It was the leader of the fur brigade.

"You saved Dick Wooten's hair," he said shortly. "I'm Sol Silver."

Bailey grinned. "I couldn't see a mountain man cut down," he answered.

The other laughed, but the black eyes peered at him appraisingly.

"What do you know of mountain men, young cub?" he asked.

The grin died from Bailey's lips. "I aim to be one," he said.

AN hour before dawn they were on the trail. Forty men, all told, and eight Pittsburgh wagons, loaded to the tilts with calicoes, cottons, beads, firearms, knives, blankets, trade goods for the Indians and the "Spaniards" of New Mexico.

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Bailey rode beside the wagon-boss, a Missouri mule and a borrowed saddle under him, his Kentucky pack lashed to the cantle and the long rifle slung across his shoulders.

Ahead he could see Sol Silver and Dick Wooten, the big red-haired man, riding stiffly, his blood-stained leather jacket with the knife slash bulging above the cotton pad and soft buckskin bandage that covered the wound.

But he was looking far beyond the column of Bent and St. Vrain wagons. Council Grove, the Grand Arkansas, Pawnee Rock, the Big Timbers, the Cimarron, Rabbit Ear Mounds, Point of Rocks, Ocate, Rio Mora, San Miguel, Santa Fe!

Santa Fe was a new road too. Bright with color, gay with the indolence of Spain, it offered welcome haven after the hardships of the trail. But the pressure was against his back and he must get on. In this Silver helped him. The big trapper came upon him in front of the Fonda on the third day of their stay.

"You say you aim to be a mountain man?" he asked without preamble and Bailey nodded.

"I'm stretching out for Taos at sunup," Silver said then.

Bailey knew what that meant. Taos men were mountain men.

"I want my beaver," he answered, grinning.

The westering sun was sliding down beyond the sierras when they reached Taos, sweat stained, saddle sore and grimed with the dust of eighty miles. But Ewing Young met them at the *portal* of his American House and led them in through the thick dark cavern of the entrance.

"Fandango tonight," he said, laughing.

In the bar a dozen men were talking loudly, drinking and eating prodigiously. They hailed Silver. "Fandango," they roared in unison, "in the sala of Don Cornelio."

Silver's answer drowned them out. "This 'coon will shine," he bellowed and uptilted a brimming gourd of aguardiente. The crystal drops sprayed his beard and with one hand he swept them away. With the other he refilled the gourd and handed it to Bailey.

Then he dropped that same hand on Bailey's shoulder. "Boys," he said, "this yere's my friend Bailey Galt of Kentucky." His eyes twinkled at Ewing Young. "And a likely beaver kitten to boot."

Bailey raised his left hand and flung the drops of aguardiente from the soft down of his chin. His eyes lighted and he flushed with the excitement of the meeting. He tried to keep his voice firm and low.

"I'm happy to meet you," he said and there was a swift swirl of talk in greeting. Then the men seemed to forget him and return to their gourds, to their plates, heaped with red meat and potatoes. Silver led him to a table and sat him down.

From Ewing Young he ordered food and drink.

A reminiscent gleam tinctured his black eyes. "I reckon we'll have to go to the dance."

Bailey looked up. "The dance?"

"Fandango." The older man leaned forward and made motions on the table with a curved forefinger. "Whenever the boys come back with beaver," he explained, "they sets out to celebrate. And here in Fernandez de Taos hit's the only celebratin' way."

The meat and potatoes were placed before them and he leaned back. "You and me will go down to the sala of Don Cornelio, eh son?"

OFF to the hotel patio in a mud walled room was a pottery jar half as tall as he was—filled with cool water. With a gourd dipper he laved himself and scrubbed his wet flesh until it glowed salmon pink beneath the natural olive of his skin. From his pack he took his last clean calico shirt and a pair of blue jean breeches. He greased his boots and rubbed them down to soft, glistening finish. Then he greased his hair and dressed and went out into the bar to wait for Sol Silver.

Stars were swimming overhead when they went down the shrouded street to the sala

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of Don Cornelio Vigil, alcalde of Fernandez de Taos for the fandango. Already the other mountain men were there, whooping like Indians, passing the liquor filled *guages* from hand to hand—profligate with money for more to fill them.

Bailey paused at the end of the long room and looked about him. At the far end he saw the musicians—six men with inevitable bandolin, the *heaca*, the *tombe*. Along the walls stood a score or more of *pelados*—half-breeds to the white men. Little men for the most, with scowling faces buried under the twist of a sarape, corn shuck cigarettes between their lips.

And dancing—the *muchachas*—the girls of Taos—the daughters, sisters, wives of the New Mexicans. He watched them move, gracefully, provocatively across the floor. Little they were too, and roundly built. Their black hair newly washed and curled, cloistered about their ears and fell in queues down between their shoulders. White *camasitas* covered their bosoms, tiny waists of fine linen that ill-hid their charms and below a wide belt of silver studded leather and an *anagua* or petticoat, of vivid hue that flared halfway down between knee and ankle. They wore no stockings and their plump, foreshortened feet were thrust archly into little shoes.

And archly, too, they wore rebosas over their curls, gay wraps to be drawn together so that only the flashing eyes could show above the smoke whirls of their cigarettes.

Silver stepped out into the maelstrom and began to dance but Bailey held his place against the wall. For the time being he was content to be a spectator. He had felt very grown and self sufficient when he left the Falls of the Ohio.

But now he felt very young and somewhat lost.

At nineteen he was but a boy to these mountain men, these veterans of searing heat and biting cold, Indian warfare and bitter draught and hunger.

He appraised them and himself as he stood there. He was as tall as the tallest, but not so broad across the shoulders, not so deep through the chest. He was quick—as quick as the quickest of them, he felt sure. And as strong—he hoped.

He was watching Silver, his preceptor and guide, when suddenly he saw the girl for the first time. She was not dancing either, but standing apart between a grizzled old man the color of strong tea in a white cup and an elderly woman, her face hidden under the black swathe of a mantilla. A pause fell across the noise of the dance and Silver came to his side. Bailey gripped his arm. "Who," he asked, "is the old man with the white hair and the skin like copper?"

Silver's laughter rattled in his ears. "His niece," he said. "Señorita Isabelle Yznaga, niece of the Alcalde Don Cornelio Vigil." His voice fell to a hoarse whisper.

"Ye cain't shine, boy. Better men have tried and lost."

From somewhere out of the crowd a *guage* passed and Silver gripped it, drinking deep. Then he was gone. But Bailey kept his eyes on the far corner near the music where the girl stood. Taller by a head than the others, cleaner, straighter, sweeter.

For a moment his eyes wavered, moving over the dancers and then back to her with a shock because as he looked he saw that she was looking at him. For just an instant their eyes met and then split away. But it had been enough.

Without volition he moved across the floor, avoiding the dancers, threading his way through laughing groups. Then he was beside her.

The old woman in the mantilla had gone. The old man, the alcalde was filling a *guage*. He gripped her wrist.

"You will dance?"

Her eyes flickered at his for an instant and she looked fearfully behind her. Her wrist gave an involuntary little tug against his fingers and then lay still.

"I cannot," she said. Surprisingly, she spoke in English and her voice was low and sweet. Beyond the alcove where they stood an open archway led to the patio. Bailey could see its white walls bathed in the silver of the moonlight. He moved quick-

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ly toward it and the girl followed, her wrist still quiet in his hand.

THERE was a stone urn filled with flowers in the wide, open court, and below it a long seat. He led her to it and stood, looking down.

There was a more than subtle difference between this girl and those he had seen dancing in the long sala. She was taller, lither. There was a keenness, and a sharpness in her features, a depth in her eyes, a glow in the ivory of her skin that set her apart.

"Who are you?" he asked.

She laughed at him and threw back her rebosa so that her head and shoulders were bared to the moonlight.

"I am the niece of the Alcalde, Don Cornelio," she said, "as Silver told you no more than a minute ago." She watched his confusion and again she laughed.

"I am Isabelle Yznaga and you are Bailey Galt of Kentucky, a likely beaver kitten."

Her mockery of Sol Silver's slurred twang set him laughing in concert with her and he lost his first embarrassment. He sat beside her. From the lighted room a swell of sound rose over them, the voices louder, the stamp of feet quicker, the music more insistent.

Under his long fingers he could feel the beat of the pulse in her arm. His own rose to match it.

"I've found what I came for," he said.

The moon went pale behind a scudding cloud and died away in the first flush of the false dawn. The girl rose abruptly and leaned forward. Bailey felt the warm sweet touch of her lips—and then she was gone across the darkened court toward the black corridor that led to her rooms.

He half followed and then stopped. He could think of nothing to say. Nothing that made sense.

"Why couldn't you dance with me?" he asked finally—and her voice came back out of the darkness.

"Because I am betrothed."

Then the night swallowed her and he stood for a long while staring into nothing before he turned back toward the big room and the dancers. In the big arch of the alcove a man stood watching him, a dark, scowling man with a cheroot between his lips and a gay sarape flung across one shoulder. For a moment the black eyes seemed to bore into his and then the lids fell and the sarape was drawn up, masking the face. The man stepped back and vanished.

Bailey walked slowly toward the lighted room. His head was swimming with the stars. The evil face of the alcove flashed before him and he had some vague recollection of having seen it before. Then it disappeared in a swirl of thoughts and he went in, seeking Sol Silver. He wanted to go back to Ewing Young—and to bed and to dream.

Noon of the next day he awakened and went to the front room where the long bar stretched to the street. Silver was already there standing above a long milky looking drink and talking with Ewing Young. They made him welcome and Young stirred rum and sugar in a glass for him, but the boy pushed it aside.

"I need money," he said shortly, "and a job to get it."

The two older men regarded him silently for a space and then Silver moved a bronzed hand indicating Young.

Following the movement Bailey saw the hotel man's eyes look questioningly at Silver and felt the barely imperceptible nod of the trapper's head. Then Young reached behind him and drew out a black book, scarred and grimed with fingerprints. Turning its pages he came to a blank, clear sheet and seized a stub of pencil.

"What's yore name?" he asked abruptly.

Bailey hesitated and Silver's deep voice intervened. "Ewing's sendin' me out tomorrow with a brigade for beaver," he said.

Bailey felt the leap of his heart against his throat but his voice was calm. "The name is Bailey Galt," he said.

He stood silent and watched, fascinated as the pencil scrawled down the page. When it stopped the book was swung about

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and pushed before him so that he could read the reckoning:

BAILEY GALT, DR.

1 saddle mule	*30 plew.*
1 saddle	*40 plew.*
1 capote	*8 plew.*
Galena lead	*1 plew.*
Tobacco (3 feet twist)	*1 plew.*
Dupont powder	*12 plew.*
6 traps	*24 plew.*
Total	*116 plew.*

Scanning it, Bailey made quick calculation. A plew was a prime beaver skin and a prime beaver was worth $6 at St. Louis. He owed Ewing Young $696. But beaver were plentiful on the Platte and along the White, the Green and Uintah rivers. He could pay it off and double it for himself with luck.

His hand moved across the wet bar and grasped the pencil stub. He wrote his name at the bottom of the page and threw down the book.

"I'll need a knife too," he said. "A knife for hair."

THEY rode out the next day, Silver at the head and with them the Delaware hunters who came from St. Louis with the pack train, Dick Wooten, up from Santa Fe, his buckskin shirt still bloodstained and a score of others.

They turned east at first, through the hills and then north for the Arkansas, then west toward Fountain Creek and on the way they halted at the fork of the Arkansas where the Purgatoire came down out of the mountains.

Bailey sat his mule long after the others had dismounted looking at the rolling green along its banks. This was the spot he had come to see—the Purgatoire—River of Lost Souls. It had haunted him and it had seemed utterly fitting that this was the place for him to come. Now he was seeing it for the first time and the feeling became a realization.

Here, some day, he would live.

They pushed on to the Platte and set their traps, but Bailey's thoughts went back to the Purgatoire—and beyond, to Taos and Isabelle Yznaga.

He had had no chance to talk with her again. But there had been a meeting of sorts. He had written a note, terse and impulsive:

Betrothed or not. Wait for me.

He had bribed a servant with the last of his American silver to deliver it and he had stood so that he could watch and had seen her come to the flat roof and blow a kiss to him across the hot, white road.

He got Silver aside the night they made camp on the Sweetwater. "I want to know about her," he urged. "I want to marry her."

The trapper scratched his head thoughtfully before he replied—and then he was vague.

"I've heard there was a man cousin from New Orleans," he said. "I don't know for certain." Then he slapped the boy's shoulder with his big hand and forced a laugh. "You best think about beaver, sonny. Marryin' with the niece of old Cornelio's likely to be downright expensive."

They wintered back on the Platte, building long lean-tos that faced the community fire, put up stretching racks for their peltry and drying frames for the meat. Then at night, while the beaver tails boiled in the pot, they sang and told tall stories of the trail.

But Bailey had only half an ear. He still could hear the voice from the patio of Don Cornelio. Then the first thaw came and April.

Silver cut his band in half and sent a dozen men back to the spring rendezvous on the Green River with their catch. As he watched the men leave Bailey smiled. His debt to Ewing Young and a credit of a hundred pounds of beaver was riding toward Taos.

Then he turned his back on them and with the remnant of the fur brigade pushed West. Silver had elected to trap the Salt

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River and go on to California and the Sacramento.

So they went on to the rim of the Grand Canyon, across the Mohave desert and the ride into San Gabriel, thence along the Sacramento and the San Joaquin.

By the dead heat of midsummer they were ready to run back, possible sacks filled and spirits high. So back they came, trapping still as they moved—along the banks of the Colorado, the Gila, the San Pedro, and finally Taos.

The last few miles they rode high and came streaming into the town shouting and laughing as the *pelados* scowled from the shadows of the white walls and the *muchachas* waved gaily from the flat roofs. There would be fandango tonight!

Bailey felt a fever in him greater than any heat of the Mohave. He drew an advance accounting of Mexican silver from Ewing Young and bought a new calico shirt and his first genuine beaver hat. He had made himself a new buckskin shirt and buckskin pantaloons, fringed with leather and hair. His boots were gone and in their stead he wore Ute moccasins, snug and soft and bead trimmed. He was a mountain man!

Then, bathed, oiled and decked out in his finery, he went swiftly in advance of the trappers to the sala of Don Cornelio. He carried with him two buffalo robes and he led a Comanche pony, stoutest and swiftest of the Plains.

From the dust of the road he looked up and saw a figure merging with the falling night. He thought he saw the well remembered movement of a white arm but he could not be sure. He went in through the portal and asked for the alcalde.

Don Cornelio greeted him quietly, but his little eyes surveyed the tall figure keenly, evaluating. A moment passed in commonplaces, in punctilio. Then Bailey cleared his throat and said abruptly:

"I have come to ask for the hand of your niece, the Señorita Isabelle."

The old man let a slow smile crease his wrinkled face before he answered.

"So it was you," he said finally. Without further word he turned and called an order to a servant and almost in the wake of it the tall woman, the duenna Bailey had seen for just a moment on the night of that first fandango, entered. Her eyes were sharp and they burned into Bailey's face. She looked at the buffalo robes, she looked through the portal to the street where the pony stood and listened while Don Cornelio introduced her as his wife—and the matter that had brought Bailey Galt to them.

When she spoke her voice was acid. "Did you think," she asked, "that the girl was a squaw; that we were Indians? Did you hope to buy her?"

She turned her back but Bailey's voice halted her.

"I love her," he said sharply and then his voice, unaccustomed to softness, went soft. "These things are only small gifts—souvenirs of my travels among your countrymen in California."

SHE turned back to regard him less harshly and he gestured, striving to be persuasive.

"As I have said, I love her. I am prepared to build for her a fine home on the fork of the Arkansas."

The older woman twisted her lips in a grimace that might have meant anything. She hesitated and then she spoke: "The girl has disgraced us," she said flatly. "She has broken her betrothal to my nephew. I wash my hands of her." She flashed a piercing look at Don Cornelio, bowed slightly and left the room. But only one thought stayed with Bailey. She had broken her betrothal!

He heard vaguely Don Cornelio's voice. "You came back with much beaver?" he asked.

It brought the boy back to reality. He straightened proudly. "Five hundred plews," he said. "Three thousand American dollars at St. Louis."

He looked at the alcalde for approbation and surprised a frown.

"Five hundred plews," the other repeated and then paused. "But," he said

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then, "you are mistaken. A plew today is worth only one American dollar."

Bailey started. "Six," he insisted but he knew as he saw the other smile that he was wrong.

"The market has gone down," he explained. "Men no longer wish the beaver hat. They wear silk." He sighed and spread his hands. "I am afraid, my friend, you could not build so good a home on five hundred dollars."

The trappers were shouting and drinking in the bar of the American House when Bailey stumbled against the thick mud wall and went inside seeking Ewing Young and the answer. He got it in one blow.

The beaver trade was done for. Ewing checked his book and gave the verdict. Bailey had earned his outfit and had $530 due in American silver.

He counted out the money and slammed the book. "Hell's full of high silk hats," he said.

Bailey did not go to the fandango with the others. But as it neared midnight the pull of desire forced him from his bed and through the purple night to Don Cornelio's. From the same doorway where he stood on that first night, he watched the dances dispiritedly. There was no sign of Isabelle. Then, it seemed hours later, a servant thrust a slip of paper into his hand.

In the moonlit patio he read it. "I will still wait."

He kissed it and laughed as only youth in love can laugh and ran out into the road and down it to the American House. But he didn't pause at the dim lit bar nor in his room. He was hitching packs to his mule, saddling his pony.

Young stuck his grizzled, buffalo head from the door and called to him.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

And Bailey, mounting, roared his answer above the drum of hoofs. "The Purgatoire," he said.

BUT Bailey never reached the Purgatoire on that trip. He had gone northeast to avoid the hills and then cut northwest and at Raton Pass he came upon a long column of moving men in uniform. He recognized them for soldiers and as he drew nearer he saw the heavy caisson supporting a mountain howitzer—the ammunition wagons, caked with mud and dust.

He would have drawn up to let them pass but an orderly detached himself from the head of the column and rode to meet him, summoning at the request of his commander. Bailey followed him and they went at once to the group at the column head where a slight, straightbacked man, beardless and with clipped mustache, addressed him.

"I am Colonel Boles," he said, "in command of a detachment of the Army of the West. Do you know the route across the desert to California?"

Bailey nodded. "I been there and back," he said shortly.

The colonel eyed him narrowly. Then he spoke crisply. "I have no time to parley," he said. "Frémont has taken California in the name of the United States. General Kearny has gone ahead. We are in support, but our guide deserted and we are lost. I will pay you three hundred dollars to take us to San Diego."

Bailey let his eye run down the straggling column. It would take months. But it was profit. He nodded and led his mule to the trail that stretched beneath the rim of the Rockies and the Mohave sands.

They moved westward, slowly, ponderously, uneventfully. And then, at the ford of the Rio Grande Del Norte, the enemy struck.

There were one hundred and sixty men in the column, but Boles, despite Bailey's remonstrance, had broken his party in two detachments.

Now as the advance guard reached mid river a small group of mounted Mexicans appeared on the opposite shore. They carried pennoned lances and carbines. But they held their fire. For a moment they paused in surprise and then galloped away. Colonel Boles gave an order and his bugler blew the charge.

In an instant the water was boiling with the thresh of the racing mounts. Looking

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back, Bailey saw the rear guard driving up the trail to the ford. Then his horse stumbled and fell heavily, throwing him into the water.

The charge went by him and on. His rifle slipped away and was buried in the muddy river. He struggled to his feet and ran after the racing troops.

A hundred yards ahead a series of small buttes rose on either side of the trail. Through this declivity the Mexicans raced and vanished. Then suddenly they reappeared, lances levelled and they counter charged. But there were not a mere twenty. There were three hundred, four hundred—and from the shelter of the rocks above, a withering fire poured down on the attacking Army of the West.

Helpless without his mount, Bailey took cover and worked his way forward. He was in time to catch Boles as he slipped from his saddle with a lance thrust through the shoulder. Then the howitzer spoke—and spoke twice again, driving the attackers away.

The army retreated to the far side of the river and made camp. Forty men had died, as many more were wounded. The Mexicans, at least four hundred strong, ringed them on all sides. It was like an old Indian buffalo surround.

Bailey knew the only hope was to get help from outside. There was a hundred mountain men in Taos. He went to Boles' tent and presented himself and his request to be permitted to attempt the ride.

The colonel's eyes were like coals.

"How did the Mexicans know we would be here?" he demanded.

Bailey shrugged. That was something for army men to know. "I reckon," he said finally, "their scouts found out."

"Scouts." The officer's voice was trembling. "I know what scouts." He shook a piece of folded paper. "You are in love with a Mexican girl, aren't you? The niece of the alcalde at Taos. No wonder you want to go back there and join our enemies. Scouts! She sent the word and you told her." He made a swift motion of dismissal.

"Put this man under arrest," he said. A sergeant grasped Bailey's arms and when the boy attempted to talk, two others struck at him and dragged him from the tent. He could hear Boles' voice behind him as they hurried him away.

"If I ever get to Taos," he said, "I'll hang that girl."

BECAUSE of the menace from the ring of lancers a double guard was posted at sundown. Bailey, fuming at the injustice of Boles' charge and stricken with fear for Isabelle, lay outwardly quiet in the Sibley tent which had been nominated as guard house. He was waiting for night.

The ride to Taos had seemed advisable before. Now it was imperative. He had to rescue Boles to vindicate himself and save Isabelle. Some way he had to break through that cordon of enemy horsemen and bring the mountain men. But he must do it without raising an alarm. And he must first escape from his own troops.

Fortune favored him on one phase. The new moon had ridden the afternoon sky for hours and would pale and die before the second guard watch was posted.

He feigned sleep and listened to the sound of the retiring camp. From the plain and hills beyond there were no sounds. Then all sound ceased and he dozed. The movements of the sergeant of the guard awakened him. The non-commissioned officer was waking the men for the second watch.

Bailey stretched slowly and rolled nearer the loose flap at the side of the tent. He heard the men move outside and fall in. Then the low command of the sergeant and the tread of their feet as they moved off. Faintly he heard the challenge of the first sentry. The men of the third watch slept near him. He rolled again and touched the tent wall—again and came out into the open. Feeling his way along between the tent pegs he crouched, listening. So far his escape was undetected. The relieving guard had marched west to post number two, then he would circle the camp

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to the south and east. He moved carefully, still crouching until he had found a hiding place near the picket line and midway between the two most easterly posts.

Then he melted into the darkness and waited. Presently the new guard passed and fifty feet away the marching sentry challenged. He half rose and slipped in between the picketed mounts. He wanted a mule, not a horse. A mule that would not whinny, not start and kick the picket line into a frenzy of alarm. At the extreme edge he found one, slipped the riata which held it and lying flat along its withers let it walk slowly out into the blackness. The mule, unshod, picking its way daintily, made no sound. In five minutes they were free of the army camp.

One danger was passed. The greater lay ahead.

He had no idea of the extent of the Mexican encampment but he did know the terrain and he estimated that the line of circling men would be thinnest to the southeast where the ground was badly broken. He headed that way, leading the mule, praying that he would be able to reach a gully which would permit him to pass through without exposing himself against even the dark line of the sky.

But when he reached the place he had selected he stopped, chilled with dismay. The sentries of the Mexicans were mounted and from the sounds of the moving ponies, he could tell that they were in double line, one riding clockwise, the other counter clockwise. He was hemmed in.

There was only one way out. He faced the mule toward the center of the enemy camp. Then he felt for a sharp stone and raked the edge of it in a cruel gash across the beast's ribs. The mule snorted once in pain and then pounded off across the flatlands.

As the mule moved one way Bailey moved in the other direction. A riding sentry swept by him so close that his swinging quirt almost flicked the fugitive's face. From right and left he heard curses, questions and answers. He plunged into the gully bottom and ran lightly.

The protecting walls ended abruptly and he came out into a dry creek bed, strewn with stones. His moccasins rattled them together and he stopped in panic. He had reached the outer line of guards.

Curled against the rough ground he took off his moccasins and tied them around his waist with the belt that had held his skinning knife. Then he began to inch forward on knees and elbows. The sharp rocks cut into his flesh, an occasional cactus plant seemed almost to thrust at him, piercing him with its sharp needles. A sound came from behind him and he froze against a swell of earth. It was a rider, coming toward him!

The sound drew nearer, came abreast of him and then passed, and stopped. Bailey could hear the slow breathing of the mount. Then the rattle of a hoof against stone sounded from the left and a sentry rode up. There was a " hello " in the patois of New Mexican and the second rider drew rein.

It seemed impossible that the horses should fail to scent him and give alarm. Movement was out of the question. And then one of the two before him struck flint to steel and lighted a wick. It flared brightly and it seemed to the boy, crouching in the inadequate shelter of the upcropped earth, as luminous as a searchlight. He saw the sentry light a cigarette and hold the metal covered wick for the other man.

In the yellow glow he saw the second face. It was the man who had scowled at him from the doorway of Don Cornelio's. He knew then who it was. The cousin scorned by Isabelle!

Then, unaware of his presence, they parted. The scowling man rode off and the sentry smothered his wick, dismounting. He dropped his lance and stretched and as he stretched, Bailey leaped and had him by the throat.

The pony snorted once and sidled away and stopped. The sentry twisted, his hands fighting for a grip on the fingers that were choking him. But Bailey forced him down, bearing upon him with his greater height and weight until he gave way and fell in an awkward unconscious heap.

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Bailey stood above the Mexican and looked about him, listening. There was no sound beyond the faint and measured tread of the circling riders in the distance. He reached for the horse's bridle and led him out into the blackness on the way to Taos.

A half mile away he mounted and drove his heels into the horse's flanks. He had escaped!

WITHIN a mile he was riding full tilt through the blackness. The pony, he praised God, was half-blooded and had speed. Once he reined in and stopped, listening with an ear against the ground. There was no sign of pursuit. He mounted, smiling grimly. It was thirty miles now into Taos. He kicked his mount on its way and the horse leaped forward. But as he leaped, the ground broke under his feet and he pitched suddenly off balance and fell crashing. Bailey was thrown clear, rolling against the sharp surface of the rocky trail. He got up, stunned and bruised. Behind him he could hear the heavy breathing of the horse, the thrash of its legs as it strove to rise.

Guided by the sound he found its head and sat on it, running his hands down the forelegs, fearing the worst—and finding it.

The off front leg had been snapped clean at the canon bone. He got up slowly and caught a breath, deep and pain-racked. He had no gun or knife. He was thirty miles from his goal and he must leave his mount to the morning sun and the birds.

He started to walk, blindly into the blackness until the sharp stones bit into his feet and he remembered his moccasins. He reached for them and found the belt broken. The moccasins were gone.

He sobbed deeply once from sheer anger and went on. It had been perhaps midnight when the horse fell. It was mid morning when he reached the rise that led to the white walls of Taos and a sharp eyed rider saw him weave and fall and rise again.

He felt hands lifting him from the saddle in front of Ewing Young's. He tried to stand but his feet were dead and he looked down at them curiously. They were swollen so that they looked like gourds instead of feet and a steady stream of blood ran out and stained the stones of the floor.

Then he was talking and men were leaving. And returning. Then they were pouring scalding liquor between his teeth and then they were riding and he was ahead of them, leading them—a hundred mountain men.

They heard the sound of firing as they approached the fork of the river where Boles lay entrenched behind his wagons and they split and swept into the battle, driving the lancers into a milling huddle caught between three fires. Then they charged and split the herd and reformed and charged again until the Mexicans were driven into a thin, disorganized line, racing for sanctuary to the south.

Bailey pulled up and watched them go. Then he swung his mount and rode to Boles' tent.

The colonel came out, his face a mask, questioning. Bailey slid from the saddle and swayed. "I brought the mountain men," he said. He attempted a salute but his legs failed and he slipped to one knee. He felt that he was losing consciousness but as he fell he saw something beyond the colonel's tent that brought him back to life. It was a face—the same face again of the scowling man. Only this time the cousin of Isabelle Yznaga was dressed in trapper's buckskin, moccasins and with a carbine slung across the withers of his horse. Bailey straightened and pulled himself into the saddle again. Silver was beside him.

"Give me your gun," he said sharply and reaching out took the trapper's pistol from his waist. Then he turned his horse.

"Who is that man?" he asked Boles, pointing to the buckskin figure on the Mexican pony.

"The guide I hired to take your place," the colonel answered.

Bailey spat and urged his mount forward. "He's the spy who set the ambush for you," he answered and rode at the other man.

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He was blinded with anger and fatigue and pain. He forgot that there was only one ball in the pistol he carried until he had faced the other man and called on him to draw. Then he saw the carbine swinging into position, saw the hatred flare in the other's eyes.

He rode in close, the carbine barked and he felt the sting of the ball along his temple. Then he was under the other's guard and fired. The man staggered in the saddle and his carbine fell. Bailey had shot him through the chest.

Bailey drew back and watched him. He faced Boles.

"There's your spy," he said again. He heard the Mexican's body strike the ground and he looked back and down at it. Then a black hood seemed to fall across his face and he fell too.

He came back to awareness a night and a day later. He looked about him and realized he was lying in one of the supply wagons. Then his eyes focused Silver, who was bending over him.

The older man saw the question at his lips and spoke first.

"It's sunup of the second day," he said. He laid one of his big hands awkwardly against the boy's chest. "Lay still, son," he said. "I'm taking these soldier boys into San Diego as a substitute."

Bailey sighed, smiled a little and went back to sleep.

By the time the cavalcade had passed the Mohave, Bailey was well enough to ride again, although his tortured feet throbbed after a day in the saddle. But he had a job to do and he stuck with it. He lead Boles' detachment into San Diego and took his three hundred dollars pay.

He would have turned back at once but Silver forced him to bed. With Mexico definitely at the verge of war, he feared for Isabelle and he feared that Taos might be closed to him.

After two days' rest he started back. But not alone. With him went the dozen or so mountain men who had come on the long march under Sol Silver. Back they went along the now familiar route—mountain, desert, plain.

Then finally they broke out of the haze of morning into the still sunlight of the hills about the white walled town and Bailey spurred his mount ahead.

Hell might be full of high silk hats but he didn't need the beaver now. In his breast pocket was a commission as scout for the United States Army at one hundred a month and ahead lay the sala of Don Cornelio and the girl he loved—the girl for whom he soon would build an empire on the River of Lost Souls.

His laughter rippled back over the dusty riders and he raised his hat. "Fandango, tonight," he roared and set spurs in his horse's sides.

THE END

How Life Insurance Began

THE first life insurance contract of which we have record was written on the 18th day of June, 1583, by and between a few merchants of London on the life of one man. The payer of the premium would win if the insured died within a specified time and the insurer would win if the insured survived the period. The contract was a bet or wager that would now be void in law—but it was the beginning of life insurance.

—*J. V. Burne.*

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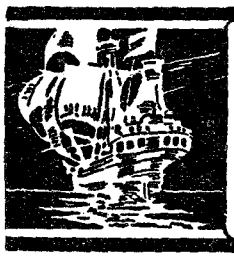

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

FROM an ex-trooper, war correspondent and chicken fancier,

JEAN CABELL O'NEILL

There is probably nothing now in my life that gives more pleasure than your publication. Back in 1896, on an overland trip ahead of John Drew, the "one and only," I met the *Golden Argosy*. Through storm and sunshine, in all the years since, I have turned to this publication for comfort and pleasure. It has helped me through long nights when I watched by the sick. Even during the many thousands of miles traveled as "correspondent," those brutal days of 1914-1918, ARGOSY was often by me.

Now, but an hour out of New York City, I find the magazine rather hard to get because I am carving a little home for my old age out of the scrub-oak section of Long Island. I have no car, and to get to the nearest news-stand I walk three miles each way. I would not walk a fifth of that distance "for a Camel"—but the ARGOSY is different.

Certain characters stand out in my mind as old friends. Sometimes I might be puzzled to remember their creators, but the men and women of this fiction *live*. It is with actual delight that I reach for *Mme. Storey*—and for *Gillian Hazeltine* I let all others wait.

The short stories are all good, and "Front and Center!" was, to my mind, splendid. I am of the Navy and the Army—as the daughter of an admiral and the widow of a U. S. A. flier. I have been a newspaper woman, and eight years in the theatrical game. As well as a war correspondent in my own right. As you can see, I have had experience of life; and looking on the life portrayed in your magazine, I find everything between its covers worthwhile.

But I do wish there was more contrast. In one recent issue, except for the clever "flying reporter" everything dealt with suffering—battle, murder, sudden death. Legion and South American stories, for instance, give so much "hot weather suffering." Couldn't you hold them back until the winter?

If a time ever comes when the feed man does not get all my cash (for to him goes the credit for keeping my chicks in health) I'll send four dollars for a subscription. At this writing that amount seems as great as the size of the National Debt.

Central Islip, N. Y.

EXPRESSING the keen appreciation of

JAMES I. LAKE

Ah! Four serials again entering our fold. Long may they last! This is said with reverence. You are the only magazine in your field publishing so many continued stories. There are many readers who do not care for such fiction, but the majority of ARGOSY's readers do, I'm sure. Thus you were wise to return to your old policy.

Easy to see which is the greatest story of the last year, "The Monster of the Lagoon," of course. I've noticed that most of the readers who have written to you have voted for it. That story, in my opinion, is one of the best ever printed in your publication. Its action and suspense, its vivid descriptions, its characterizations and breezy dialogue plainly advertise its worth in the reader's eye.

A few more words: there are authors and authors; but none of the quality of A. Merritt. For years I've vainly tried to acquire his "Moon Pool" and "Ship of Ishtar."

VOTES FOR 1935 ARGOSY COVERS

ARGOSY COUPON

(1 vote—11-30-35. This coupon not good after Dec. 21, 1935.)

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NOTE: *The supply of* ARGOSY *original drawings has been exhausted and the offer expires with the Dec. 21 issue.*

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Please send along more of Tuttle's inimitable *Henry* and *Judge* range comedies. They are uproarious beyond anyone's imagining.

Challis's *Tizzo* has also met with approval in these parts. His fiery hair on the cover always announces another action novel to us. Historical adventures are especially appealing to me.

Ah! *The White Indian* returns! Welcome to my brother of the Western plains! May his friendly pipe always stay lit. Max Brand is always accepted in this household; in fact, we think him on the level with Zane Grey and Seltzer as a story teller.

Dennis Lawton and his "Blackbirds" has embellished this publication with a swell new talent. Long may he wave, too!

Riley Dillon seems to be turning "straight," doesn't he? The ruination of a smooth character. H. Bedford-Jones should "wise up" and straighten out that little entanglement and retain the shady side of his character.

Newark, N. J.

Of Interest to You!

WHAT do you consider the best story (of any length) published in ARGOSY since June 1, 1935? For the twelve post cards or letters from readers which name the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others the magazine will give twelve full, yearly subscriptions. Literary style or skill will not count, for what the editors want to know is exactly what stories readers like best, and *why*.

Letters selected will be published from week to week, but ***not all letters published will be rewarded with subscriptions.***

Your letter must reach us not later than January 1, 1936. Address it to The Editor, ARGOSY Magazine, 280 Broadway, New York City.

SUSPECTED BY HENRY

If you like *Henry Harrison Conroy*—if you read and liked "The Sheriff of Tonto Town" (and who didn't?)—you won't miss the next issue of ARGOSY, containing the latest long novelette about this newest and best of the character creations of

W. C. TUTTLE

FLYING CIRCUS

Something unique—wholly different!—The dramatic story of what was perhaps the most colorful phase of the history of aviation in America—those vivid days when most of us had never seen a plane, when people were still paying fabulous sums to go up in one, and when spectators stood open-mouthed at the stunts of aërial barnstormers. Six thrilling parts by

GEORGE BRUCE

A TILLICUM YOU CAN TRUST

One of those off-the-trail stories about an unfamiliar spot, the Aleutian Islands—and a yarn you'll warm to, written by

H. H. MATTESON

COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—DECEMBER 7

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A2—Stunning flower design in 14K natural and white gold. High quality brilliant diamond. $2.10 a month.

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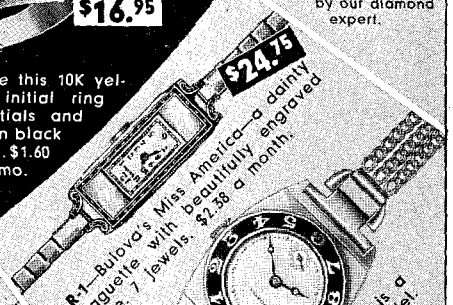
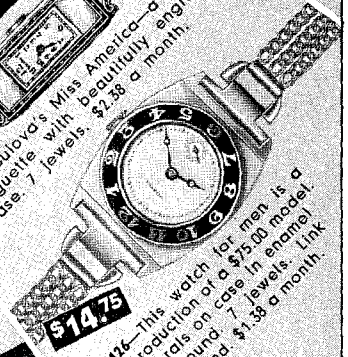
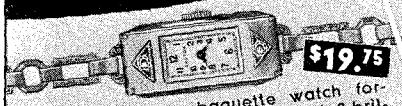


R-1—Bulova's Miss America—a dainty baguette with beautifully engraved case. 7 jewels. $2.38 a month.

R-4—Ladies' Bulova watch. New round style, 7 jewels. Black silk cord band. $2.38 a month.

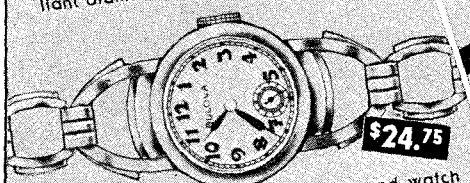


2126—This watch for men is a reproduction of a $75.00 model. Numerals on case in enamel background. 7 jewels. Link chain band. $1.38 a month.

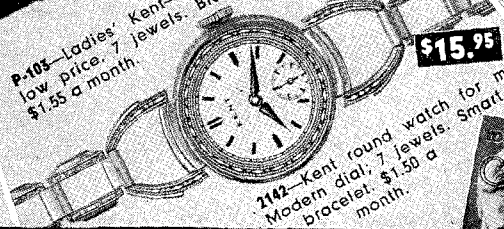


1842—This dainty baguette watch formerly sold for $29.50. It's set with 2 brilliant diamonds. 7 jewels. $1.90 a month.

P-105—Ladies' Kent—round style at special low price. 7 jewels. Black silk cord band. $1.55 a month.



M-1—Bulova Commodore—a new round watch for men. 15 jewel movement. New style link bracelet. $2.38 a month.



2142—Kent round watch for men. Modern dial; 7 jewels. Smart link bracelet. $1.50 a month.

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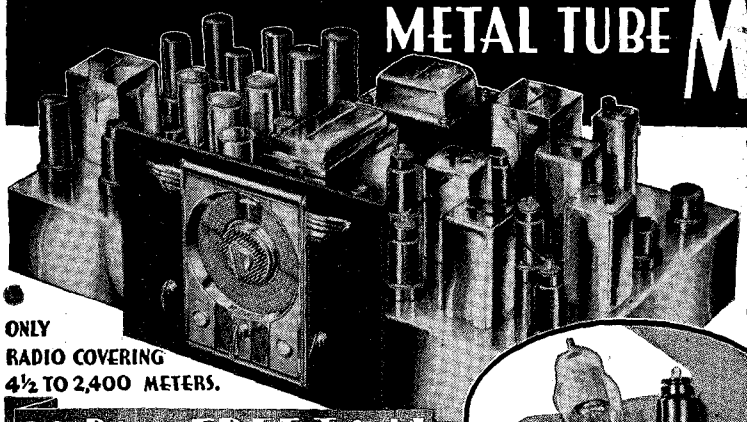

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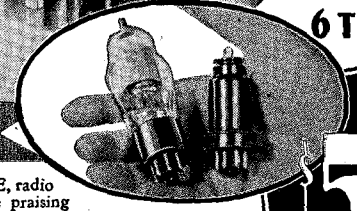

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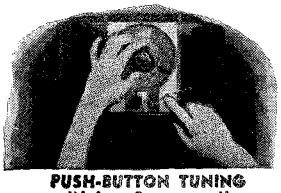

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Now, Push-Button Silent Tuning is offered for first time! Simply pushing Silencer Button hushes set between stations . . . suppresses noises. Pressing Station Finder Button automatically indicates proper dial position for bringing in extremely weak stations.

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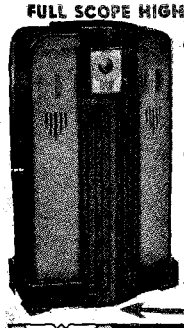

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EVERYWHERE, radio enthusiasts are praising this amazingly beautiful, bigger, better, more powerful, super selective, 18-tube 6-tuning range radio. They say it is a tremendous improvement over Midwest's 16-tube set, so popular last season. It is sold direct to you from Midwest Laboratories at a positive saving of 30% to 50%. **(This statement has been verified by a Certified Public Accountant who conducted an impartial survey among representative Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana radio retailers.)** Before you buy any radio, write for FREE 40-page 1936 catalog. Never before so much radio for so little money. Why pay more? You are triple-procected with: One Year Guarantee, Foreign Reception Guarantee and Money-Back Guarantees!

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